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Editorial

Harmony in Diversity: Exploring Coexistence in Kurdistan



By | *Himdad A. Muhammad*

In the diverse tapestry of Kurdistan, a region often foreshown for its unyielding spirit and strong will, there lies a profound yet often ignored element: coexistence. Nestled amidst the uneven landscapes and echoing through the active cities, the ethos of harmonious living is deeply rooted within the Kurdistan people. As we navigate the complexities of our modern world, it is imperative to recognize and celebrate the significance of coexistence in shaping the collective identity and progress of the Kurdistan region within the federal Iraq.

At its core, coexistence embodies the spirit of tolerance, mutual respect, and acceptance of diversity. In a region marked by a mosaic of ethnicities, religions, and cultural traditions, the ability to coexist peacefully is not merely a virtue but a necessity. The rich tapestry of Kurdistan society is woven with threads of myriad backgrounds, beliefs, and perspectives. This diversity lends vibrancy to our communities and enriches the fabric of our collective heritage.

In examining the importance of coexistence in Kurdistan, one cannot overlook its historical significance. For centuries, Kurds have lived alongside various ethnic and religious groups, fostering bonds of friendship and solidarity amidst periods of adversity. Whether Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Assyrians or any other ethnicity, the shared experiences of triumphs and tribulations have forged an unbreakable bond, transcending superficial differences and uniting us in our shared humanity.

Moreover, the spirit of coexistence serves as a beacon of hope in a region often marred by conflict and division. In a world rife with sectarian strife and ethnic tensions, Kurdistan stands

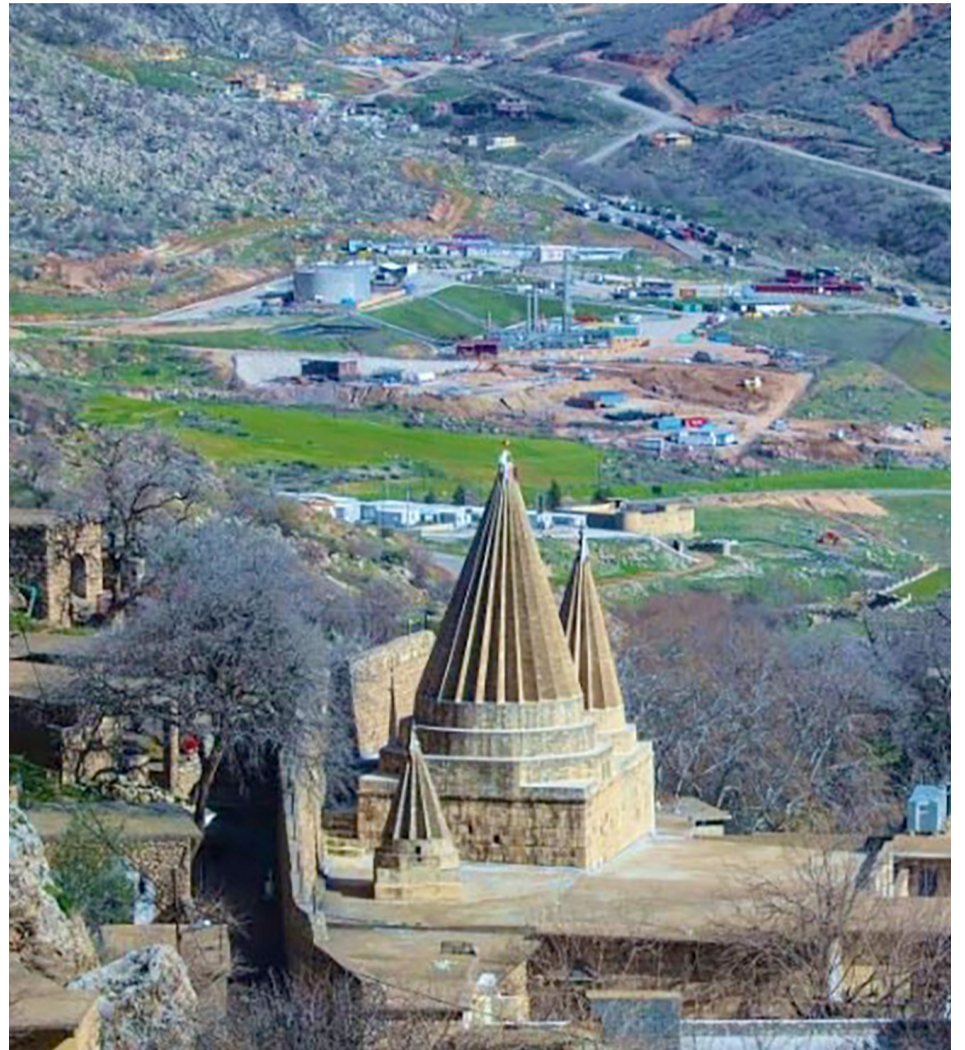
as a testament to the transformative power of unity in diversity. By embracing pluralism and inclusivity, we defy the forces of hatred and intolerance, charting a course towards a brighter and more equitable future for generations to come.

Furthermore, the promotion of coexistence is not merely a moral imperative but also a pragmatic necessity for the socio-economic development of Kurdistan. In an increasingly interconnected global landscape, fostering an environment of tolerance and openness is conducive to fostering innovation, attracting investment, and cultivating a thriving civil society. By harnessing all its citizens' collective talents and energies, Kurdistan can unlock its full potential as a beacon of progress and prosperity in the heart of the Middle East.

Yet, the journey towards genuine coexistence is not without its challenges. As we strive to build a more inclusive society, we must confront the threats of prejudice, discrimination, and inequality that linger within our midst. Whether addressing systemic barriers to social mobility or combating the scourge of extremism, the task ahead requires steadfast resolve and unwavering commitment from all stakeholders.

Finally, the importance of coexistence in Kurdistan cannot be overstated. It is the foundation upon which our collective identity is built, the guiding principle that shapes our interactions with one another, and the key to unlocking the region's full potential. As we embark on this journey together, let us reaffirm our commitment to tolerance, understanding, and empathy, recognizing that in embracing our differences, we sow the seeds of a more just, peaceful, and prosperous future for all.

Lalsh Temple Revitalized: US Funds \$2.5 Million Restoration Project Approaching Completion



The ongoing refurbishment of the Lalsh temple, which received a financial grant of \$2.5 million from the United States in 2019, is approaching completion of its first phase.

Khalid Narmo, an adviser to the religious council of the Yazidi Kurds, has highlighted a significant initiative to renovate the shrine in Lalsh. This endeavor is backed by the US State Department and is being carried out by the University of Pennsylvania.

The US Consul embarked on a visit to Lalsh to oversee the ongoing repair efforts of the temple. During the tour, the Consul had meetings with the religious council of the Yazidis, where he reiterated his unwavering support

for the Yazidi people.

The US consul paid a visit to Sheikhan where he had a meeting with the mayor and a group of refugees from Sinjar. During the tour, he introduced a new project valued at \$150,000 to the people of Sheikhan, including all communities. Over a span of two years, the initiative aims to provide English language instruction to a total of 144 high school students.

"I am delighted to inform you that we have assigned an extra \$150,000 to the Free Yezidi Foundation. This funding will be utilized to provide English language education to over 140 high school students in Sheikhan over the course of the next two years," said Mark Straw,

the United States Consul General in the Kurdistan Region. He further noted that some individuals reside in camps to improve their quality of life and employment prospects following their educational pursuits.

Zozan Hasib, the director of education at the Free Yezidi Foundation, said that the objective of the initiative is to provide English language instruction and foster personal development among participants aged 13 to 16.

In the previous year, the United States allocated a sum of \$114 million in humanitarian aid to support refugees and local people residing in the Kurdistan Region.

Empowering KRG Envoys: PM Barzani and Deputy PM Talabani Emphasize Vital Role of Representatives in Global Relations

Diplomatic Dynamics: KRG Representatives Drive Foreign Policy Initiatives and Economic Collaboration

Prime Minister Masrour Barzani of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) said in the third conference of KRG Representatives entitled "Political Status of Kurdistan Region in the Federal Iraqi Government: Prospects and Obstacles" that the Kurdistan Region's foreign and international relations witnessed significant improvement in recent years.

PM Masrour Barzani participated in the third conference of the KRG delegates in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Barzani addressed the conference, emphasizing that the Kurdistan Region's foreign and international relations had made significant progress and advancement in recent years. The number of consulates and diplomatic envoys in the Kurdistan Region is rising.

"We have plans to expand the number of representative offices of the Kurdistan Regional Government overseas. Additionally, we aim to establish representative offices in several friendly and significant countries that already have consulates in Kurdistan. This initiative and endeavor seeks to enhance diplomatic ties, economic relations, as well as cultural, scientific, and academic collaborations," he stated.

"The Kurdistan Region, recognized as a constitutional and legal entity within Iraq, has consistently contributed to the security and stability of Iraq and the surrounding region. It seeks to establish strong relationships with neighboring countries and the international community based on shared interests and mutual respect," Barzani added in his speech.

In addition, PM Barzani stated that: "The Kurdistan Region has consistently maintained a non-threatening stance towards all nations in the region and the global community at large, consistently offering friendly relations." Furthermore, he said: "Hence, it is imperative to acknowledge and safeguard our shared interests with the nations in the area and globally. It is crucial to uphold and refrain from infringing upon the sovereignty of both the Kurdistan and Iraq."

During his speech, Barza-

ni also added that the representations hold significant importance and have the potential to effectively enhance the relations between the Kurdistan Region and other nations.

In the inaugural session, Deputy Prime Minister Qubad Talabani emphasized the need to enhance political ties between the Kurdistan Region and other

Talabani said that the presence of both the United States and the KRG in each other's territories has altered the current circumstances. Hence, the significance of this connection lies in the fact that it enables both sides to promptly stay updated on the situation and US policy in accordance with the KRG goal.

"Our representative must



nations, while also focusing on bolstering economic, cultural, and other forms of relations.

He said that these conferences are crucial for the delegates to have a deeper understanding of the situation in the Kurdistan Region and to enhance collaboration with the ministries, governors, and institutions of the Kurdistan Region.

He remarked that the Kurds made a substantial contribution to the Iraqi battle for freedom, noting the exemplary performance of the KRG representative in the United States in delivering precise intelligence to the US administration.

effectively communicate our messages and comprehend the immense pressure and imminent threat faced by Kurdistan, as well as identify the potential opportunities for the United States in the Kurdistan Region," he said.

The KRG currently operates diplomatic missions in 14 countries, dedicated to advancing the agenda and policies of its ninth cabinet. Prior to this, Safin Dizayee, the Head of the Foreign Relations Office, previously indicated intentions to establish representative offices in numerous additional nations.

Foreign consulates locat-

ed in the Kurdistan Region.

On the international stage, the Kurdistan Region serves as host to consulates, general, consulates, and representative offices from approximately 40 nations, 38 of which are United Nations members. Notably, the Islamic Republic of Iran stands as the sole country with consulates in both Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. It's worth noting that in 2007, Russia and Iran made history by establishing their inaugural consulates in the Kurdistan Region.

Dr. Mohammed Shukri, Chairman of the Kurdistan Regional Investment Board, said that the significance of this conference lies in the Foreign Relations Office fulfilling its responsibility to represent the KRG internationally. "We will be attending this conference with a dedicated panel focused on economic matters. We have formally sought to enhance the level of representation of the KRG in nations that have shown interest in investing with us," Shukri said.

It is necessary to have a means of communication, Shukri said, between the KRG and these representative offices. Furthermore, Shukri added that: "Greater endeavors should be made to promote global awareness of the Kurdistan Region. Countries should assume a more efficacious role than their current one."

"The representatives

should not only politically represent the Kurdistan Region, but also actively contribute to its economic development by promoting the region and providing effective economic support. This will help foreign companies gain trust from investors, knowing that the Kurdistan Region is supportive and will facilitate business opportunities for them," he added.

"To date, the Foreign Relations Office has effectively facilitated connections between businesses in the Kurdistan Region and the international community," said Shukri, Chairman of the Kurdistan Regional Government's Investment Board, during the second panel of the third conference.

"Following explicit directives from the prime minister, we have created a distinct division within the board, known as the "Foreign Investment Attraction Unit." In June 2023, the Kurdistan brand was officially unveiled."

Ziad Rauf, the Kurdistan Regional Government's envoy in Poland, emphasized the significance of the conference in the current context, as the Middle East and the global community are experiencing a period of instability.

The KRG Representative in Poland emphasized the crucial significance of diplomacy in international affairs. The current scenario necessitates more activity from the representatives and foreign relations offices of the KRG in order to secure support and assistance.

Poland has significant geopolitical importance inside Europe and wields considerable influence over European political affairs. The KRG established its formal representative in Poland in 2004. A significant outcome of these relationships was the successful

completion of higher education by several Kurdish students. As a consequence, these individuals today hold prominent positions within the Kurdistan Region and have substantially profited from their exposure to Polish expertise.

Fawzi Qadur, the representative of the KRG in Switzerland, said that both the Davos Conference Committee and the Swiss government are recognizing the Kurdistan Region as a sovereign entity and are prepared to provide comprehensive support to the region.

The KRG envoy in Switzerland also said that the missile strike on Erbil was denounced by international leaders at the Davos summit. They also reiterated their support for the Kurdistan Region and emphasized the need to safeguard its sovereignty.

The Swiss government highly values the Kurdistan Region and consistently advocates for the development and broadening of economic and political ties between both nations.

In his opening statement, Safin Dizayee, the Head of the Foreign Relations Office, underscored the significance of the third conference of the KRG, noting that it convenes during a critical period. He emphasized that the primary objective of the conference is to restructure and strengthen the ties between the Kurdistan Region and Iraq.

Several ministers and heads of autonomous organizations within the Kurdistan Regional Government attended the conference to provide a presentation on their respective areas of expertise. The overarching objective is to collectively formulate suggestions and recommendations by the conclusion of the conference.

— "We have plans to expand the number of representative offices of the Kurdistan Regional Government overseas. Additionally, we aim to establish representative offices in several friendly and significant countries that already have consulates in Kurdistan. This initiative and endeavor seeks to enhance diplomatic ties, economic relations, as well as cultural, scientific, and academic collaborations,"

— PM Barzani.

US and Kurdistan Collaborate to Strengthen Peshmerga Forces in Ongoing Reintegration Efforts

A tripartite meeting, including the US Department of Defense-Pentagon, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), and the Kurdistan Regional Presidency, convened to discuss strategies for consolidating the Peshmerga forces.

The Executive Management body, a collaborative body of representatives from the United States and the Kurdistan Region, convened at the presidency office in Erbil. Following the meeting, a statement was issued by the Pentagon and the Kurdistan Regional Presidency.

The Kurdistan Region and the United States have jointly affirmed their commitment to establish a long-term partnership aimed at consolidating the Peshmerga forces under the authority of the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs. This collaborative effort seeks to create a proficient and efficient military organization dedicated to the complete eradication of ISIS.

The committee convened to evaluate the ad-



vancements made in the Peshmerga reforms, as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding between the US Department of Defense and the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government, which was extended in September.

The following is the

verbatim text of the joint statement issued by the Pentagon and the Kurdistan Regional Presidency:

On December 29, 2023, high-ranking representatives from the US Department of Defense and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region convened a meeting of the Executive Director's

Committee on Peshmerga issues at the Kurdistan Regional Government Presidency in Erbil.

The purpose of the discussion was to evaluate the advancements achieved in the restructuring of the Peshmerga forces, as outlined in the Memorandum of Un-

derstanding between the US Department of Defense and the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government. This agreement was recently extended in September.

The committee summarized the advancements achieved in the reforma-

tion of the Peshmerga force and reached a consensus on crucial aspects for the next year, as part of a sustained effort to incorporate the Peshmerga force into the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs and establish a proficient force with the ability to overcome ISIS.

The Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs has achieved substantial advancements in the reformation of both the budgetary and military structure. The US Department of Defense and the Department of Peshmerga Affairs express satisfaction in their ongoing commitment to implementing the reforms specified in the 2022 Memorandum of Understanding between the US Department of Defense and the Department of Peshmerga Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government. The United States assists the Iraqi people, including the Kurdistan Region, in developing a robust, secure, and independent Iraq.

APIKUR asks US Congress to pressure Iraqi government for resumption of oil export from Kurdistan

The Association of the Petroleum Industry of Kurdistan (APIKUR) appeals to the United States Congress for immediate action to help resolve halted crude oil exports from the Kurdistan Region.

In a recent statement posted on its website, APIKUR has urged the US Congress to intervene in resolving the oil dispute between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi Federal Government. APIKUR highlighted that the halt in oil exports is significantly affecting Kurdistan's economy and stability.

According to the letter addressed to Congress by APIKUR, investments totaling over \$10 billion from US and international companies are currently at risk. The urgency of the situation underscores the need for immediate action from the US Congress to encourage the Iraqi Prime Minister to address the impasse in oil production

and exports, especially before his upcoming visit to the United States.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani is set to visit the US soon to take part in talks held within the framework of the US-Iraq Higher Military Commission (HMC).

Myles B. Caggins III, APIKUR spokesman said that "the Iraqi Prime Minister should demonstrate that he is committed to leading his government to deliver a mutually beneficial solution that will no longer economically strangle the Kurdistan Region of Iraq."

Caggins added that the solutions should include "resumption of oil exports from the Kurdistan Region into the international markets with payment and contractual certainty for western and American companies to resume operations. The export of oil is the foundation of Iraq's economy, and all Iraqis will benefit when full production and global sales



resume from the Kurdistan Region."

APIKUR previously announced that a number of its member companies were in Baghdad for talks with the Iraqi federal government, hoping that the talks can be expanded to achieve formal agreements between all parties

to resume full oil production and exports from the Kurdistan Region.

Iraq is currently exporting crude oil only via its southern oil export terminals, with around 450,000 barrels per day (bpd) of exports from the Kurdistan Region oil fields shut in since March 2023 due

to a dispute between Erbil and Baghdad over who should authorize and manage oil production and export in the Kurdistan Region.

Before the halt, the KRG was exporting 400,000 barrels a day through Turkey.

The loss in oil revenues,

the KRG's main source of income, has worsened the financial situation and left the government unable to pay its public sector as the federal government delays money release from the Kurdistan Region's share in the national budget.

235 new ATMs to be installed as part of 'My Account' initiative



The digitalization of government affairs stands as a key priority for the ninth cabinet of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), with the 'My Account' project emerging as a strategic endeavor spearheaded by the KRG.

Marwan Ahmad, supervisor of the My Account project, affirmed that collaborative efforts are underway with all participating banks to expand the network of ATM stations across the region.

"He further disclosed that in Erbil governorate alone, 80 stations are anticipated to be installed,

incorporating a total of 235 ATMs, aimed at facilitating smooth cash withdrawals for public sector employees.

In February 2023, KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani inaugurated the 'My Account' initiative, a financial inclusion program tailored for public sector employees, pensioners, and security forces."

According to the KRG, "My Account" will provide a safe, transparent, and convenient way for government workers and pensioners to access their salaries through a network

of ATMs that will grow to cover over 1,000 locations in the Kurdistan Region. Additionally, it will offer public sector employees access to modern banking services, such as loans, savings products, domestic and international transfers, international cash withdrawals, and online and digital payments.

By the end of 2023, 175,000 civil servants in the Kurdistan Region were registered in the My Account Initiative, according to a statement KRG Department of Media and Information.

KRG Ministry of Health and Korea's KOICA Agency Forge Cancer Treatment Partnership

The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Ministry of Health has entered into an agreement with the South Korean KOICA Agency aimed at bolstering the capacity of the region's health centers to expedite the detection of cancer patients.

During a press conference, Saman Barznji, the Minister of Health for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), unveiled that the Ministry of Health has signed an agreement with Korea's KOICA to enhance the early detection of cancer patients and streamline the diagnosis process.

Barznji said that at the request of the KRG, the delegation will make its

assessment in order to open cancer hospitals and provide cancer-related health equipment in some districts.

"Cancer is among the chronic diseases that have significantly burdened health systems in the developing world, and it has emerged as a major health concern for us as well," the Health Minister emphasized.

The KRG minister further added that the Republic of Korea and the KOICA agency have extended support to the Kurdistan Region across various fields, particularly in the provision of medical equipment and medicines, which have proven invaluable during emergencies.



KRG Grants Exemption: Kurdistan Welcomes Tax-Free Importation of Hybrid Vehicles

The Director General of Customs of the Kurdistan Region has formally petitioned the Council of Ministers, seeking an exemption of customs taxes for importing environmentally friendly hybrid automobiles.

Samal Abdulrahman, the Director General of Customs of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), announced that hybrid automobiles, known for their ecological benefits, will now be exempt from customs taxes. The exemption of such cars will fall within the jurisdiction of the Council of Ministers.

The Iraqi Economic Ministerial Council, led by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, convened last December. The meeting was attended by the Ministers of Planning, Finance, Commerce, Agriculture, Industry, and Labor and Social Affairs Finance, as well as the prime minister's advisors on economic and legal affairs and the deputy minister of oil. The conference resolved to endorse the importation of eco-friendly and electric automobiles, while simultaneously eliminating customs tariffs and

registration costs imposed on such vehicles.

"These vehicles are ecologically sustainable." These cars are being produced globally and individuals are urged to use them. Hence, we endorse this matter and advocate for their exemption as a means of assistance, enabling people to purchase them," he said.

According to Brigadier Ziad Qaisi, the spokesperson for the Iraqi Traffic Directorate, there are 7.1 million registered automobiles in Iraq, excluding the Kurdistan Region, as of Decem-

ber 28, 2023.

Abdul Zahra Hindawi, the Iraqi Ministry of Planning spokesperson, said that the quantity of automobiles in Iraq is growing annually, with around seven million registered vehicles of all kinds now. In addition to motorcycles and tuk-tuks, the total number ranges from 250,000 to 300,000. The number of registered automobiles in state offices is around 300,000.

Hindawi reports that the city and roads are facing significant strain due to the high volume of vehicles. Consequently, the

government intends to construct additional ring roads and streets to accommodate the increased vehicle count. They also plan to import vehicles as necessary and promote public transportation as a means to alleviate congestion on the streets.

Based on the most recent traffic data, as of 31-3-2023, there are officially 1,993,552 registered transportation devices in the Kurdistan Region. Out of them, 1,973,778 are various kinds of automobiles and 19,774 are motorbikes.

IHEC announces start of biometric registration for the Kurdistan Region parliamentary elections

The Iraqi High Election Commission (IHEC) has initiated the biometric registration of voters in the Kurdistan Region in anticipation of the Kurdistan Parliamentary elections.

Haider Mohammed, Director of the IHEC's Erbil Office, affirmed that preparations have commenced for the Kurdistan Region parliamentary election, with biometric registration of voters scheduled to commence on February 1st and extend for a duration of 20 days.

An Independent High Electoral Commission

(IHEC) official stated, 'According to a letter we have received from the National Office of the High Election Commission, the registration process for individuals born in 2006 will commence on February 1st.' He further elaborated that this registration is applicable to those who have not yet been registered in the biometric system. He mentioned that 53 centers will be opened for the voters to register their names.

On December 3rd, 2024, the Independent High Election Commission (IHEC) issued an official

letter to the Kurdistan Region, indicating its inability to conduct parliamentary elections on February 25th, 2024. This marked the third occasion where election dates had been set for the Kurdistan parliamentary elections, only to be postponed due to political disputes and technical challenges.

In October 2022, the Kurdistan Region parliament had previously extended its term to December 31st, 2023, as its original term expiration date was November 6th, 2022.



Minister of components affairs: Quota system of Kurdistan parliament politicized



The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister for Kurdistan Region's Components Affairs last week met with the representatives of all components in the Region to discuss the Federal Court hearing on the quota seats for components in the Kurdistan Parliament.

Aydin Marouf, the KRG Minister and senior member of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, said that the meeting discussed the issue of the quota seats, which the Iraqi Federal Court is expected to finalize it in its hearing on February 4.

"The quota seats in the Kurdistan Region parliament is organized according to the law and is a legitimate right of all components to participate in the elections and the political process in the Re-

gion," Aydin Ma'roof, said during a press conference in Erbil.

Marouf commended the situation of the components in the Kurdistan Region, stating that there is a good support from the KRG to promote co-existence and preserve the rights of all religious and ethnic community that peacefully coexist in Kurdistan.

The quota system in the Kurdistan parliament has been politicized by some political parties and will negatively impact the situation as this is a grave interference in the affairs of the components, the KRG minister said.

The Minister of Components Affairs urged the Iraqi Federal Court to take into account the situation of the components before

making a final decision on the quota seats and reject the complaint, because the quota system in the Kurdistan Region parliament have a special situation and all parties should take into account condition them.

Aydin Marouf, representing the Turkmen, Chaldean, Syrian, and Assyrian communities in the Kurdistan Region, urged the Federal Court to dismiss the complaint. Expressing their opposition, Marouf emphasized the potential detrimental effects of allocating quota seats based on provinces. He cautioned that such a distribution method could adversely impact the status of ethnic and religious groups, as well as undermine the coexistence among communities.

Kurdistan Flag to be Hoisted on Kurdish Schools in Kirkuk

Upon the request of a Kurdish Member of the Iraqi Parliament, the Iraqi Minister of Education has granted approval for the hoisting of the Kurdistan flag on Kurdish schools in Kirkuk. This significant development marks the first time such an event has been permitted since October 16, 2017.

Kurdish MP Najwa Kakayi, who also serves on the education committee in the Iraqi parliament, confirmed to Kurdish media outlets that Kurdish schools in Kirkuk will now have the opportunity to raise the Kurdistan flag alongside the Iraqi flag. Furthermore, schools representing

other languages will also be allowed to display their respective flags, as stated by the Kurdish MP, citing remarks from Iraqi Minister of Education Ibrahim Nams Jabouri. Although the decision has not been implemented yet, however, according to the Kurdish MP, the Minister has advised his office to address Kirkuk Education Directorate to implement the "verbal" decision, quoting that "no official letter is needed" as the Minister's office is meant to advise and inform the Kirkuk Education Directorate via phone in order to facilitate the decision.

According to the

directorate of Kurdish studies in Kirkuk, which is run by Kurdistan Region Government's Ministry of Education, there are over 550 Kurdish schools and kindergartens in Kirkuk, run by 10 thousand teachers, while 96 thousand students getting benefit from them.

After October 16th, 2017 events in Kirkuk, Kurdistan flag was removed from upon all schools, offices and government buildings in Kirkuk.



Water level of Duhok, Dukan dams increased compared to last year

The recent rainfall that covered most parts of the Kurdistan Region, has led to the increase of water level of two major dams in the Region with 63 centimeters raise of water level in Dukan dam in Sulaimani governorate and 4 meters raise of Duhok dam.

Kochar Jamal, director of the Dukan Dam, stated that 23 percent of the dam is full, but there is still a long rainy season to increase the level of the dam, saying that with the recent raining, the dam witnessed an increase to its water level by 63 centimeters. While the overall increase of water levels during the raining season has reached 2 meters and 68 centimetres.

According to Farhad Mohammed, the Director of Duhok dam, "350 millimeters of water has

been absorbed in the dam during the current rainy season; as the total amount of water collected at the dam so far has reached 24.9 million cubic meters.

The level of the dam has risen by four meters compared to the same period last year, he said

As per the data of the general directorate of the weather forecast in the Kurdistan Region, during the current rainfall season Erbil witnessed 201.9 mm of rain compared to 74.3 last year. In Sulaimani 208.9 mm of rainfall compared to 209.3 in the previous year. In Duhok, there has been 499.4 mm of rainfall so far this year compared to 170.9 last season. And in Halabja, 333.2 mm of rainfall in this season and 156.5 last year/

There are three main



A view of the Duhok dam.

dams in the Kurdistan Region, the Dukan Dam is the largest and has the capacity to store seven billion cubic meters of water. The Darbandikhan Dam is the second largest

dam with a capacity of 3 billion cubic meters of water, while the third dam is the Duhok Dam with a capacity of 52 million cubic meters of water.

The Kurdistan Regional

Government has been implementing dozens of strategic projects including the construction of dams to manage water shortages while construction on other dams and ponds is

ongoing, including building Gomaspan dam which once completed will be the third largest dam in the Kurdistan Region and largest one in Erbil governorate.

Third largest dam to be completed in summer of 2024



The Gomaspan Dam, set to be the largest dam in Erbil Governorate, and the third largest dam in the Kurdistan Region once completed. According to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the dam will have an expected reservoir storage of 115 million cubic metres.

Faraidoon Sabir, the supervising engineer of the Gomaspan dam said that work is ongoing on the dam for 24 hours a day and the work only suspended momentarily in case of rain as the company intends to complete the project by the next summer.

The foundation stone of the dam was laid in the Autumn of 2013, but the ISIS war and financial

crisis delayed work. Work resumed in the Spring of 2021 and 65% of the work is now completed, where out of the dam's 70 meters height, 35 meters have been constructed.

According to Sabir, the dam has many benefits, including playing a pivotal role in raising underground water levels, providing water for 16,000 square metres of agricultural land and foster the development of fish farming.

"The entire project has an estimated budget of IQD 95 billion Iraqi dinars. It has already created employment opportunities for 300 engineers and technicians, with 75% of the workforce being local residents," the KRG web-

site announced.

In an interview with the Department of Media and Information, the Gomaspan project manager Abdullah Hamad Gardi highlighted one of the dam's significant advantages: its unique location, which is also poised to become an exceptional touristic site.

Over the past four years, the KRG's ninth cabinet has placed great emphasis on water security. The government has pledged to build several dams and ponds. These efforts are expected to not only sustain water resources but also foster the development of agriculture and tourism sectors in the region.

Work on Kalar-Sulaimani road continues despite lack of funding

The work on strategic Kalar-Sulaimani road is ongoing as the executing company is requesting 35 billion IQD from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to complete the project.

Osman Hama Saeed, the owner of Beshkan construction company, has stated that 70 percent of Kalar Sulaimani road has been completed and if

the company receive 35 billion IQD from the government, they can work on completing the remaining 30 percent.

The project which started in December 2017, was supposed to be completed within 540 days. Work on the project was suspended a few times due to the financial issues facing the KRG.

The owner of Beshkan

company said that even though the KRG still owes them 11 billion IQD, yet work is still progressing and 70 percent of the project have been completed so far.

The project is 40 kilometers length with 20 kilometres of 2 sided road in addition to 10 kilometres of new road construction and 10 kilometres reconstructing the old road.

If the government releases up to 35 billion IQD to the company, they will be able to complete the project before the end of 2024.

Last year, the Central Bank of the Kurdistan Region (KRG) Sulaimani Branch decided to provide the company with 250 million dinars weekly. "Even though we have been paid that amount of money for over a month, we have not

suspended work on the road," the owner of the company said.

The total budget of the project is 137 billion dinars, but due to the financial crisis and lack of money for the company has been suspended several times.

Kalar-Darbandikhan road, which is also Kalar-Sulaimani road, is used by thousands of people of

the Kurdistan Region's Garmian area and other Iraqi provinces on daily basis.

In a traffic accident on between Kalar and Darbandikhan in Sulaimani governorate last week, four people were killed. The completion of the road project will likely decrease the number of traffic accidents.

Business Relations between the USA and Iraq... Navigating Opportunities

By *Dr. Mathew Jose*

The economic ties between the United States and the Middle East have long been significant, spanning diverse sectors such as energy, finance, technology, and trade. With both regions holding strategic importance and offering lucrative opportunities, the business relations between the USA and the Middle East continue to evolve, driven by mutual interests, investment flows, and geopolitical dynamics. In this article, we explore the multifaceted nature of these business relations, examining key sectors, recent developments, and future prospects for collaboration. Energy cooperation stands as a cornerstone of the business relations between the USA and the Middle East. The Middle East, rich in oil and gas reserves, has historically been a vital supplier of energy resources to the United States. However, with the US shale revolution transforming the global energy landscape, the USA has emerged as a significant producer and exporter of oil and natural gas. Despite this shift, the Middle East remains an important market for US energy companies, with investments in exploration, production, and infrastructure projects continuing to foster collaboration between the two regions. Trade and investment ties between the USA and the Middle East span a wide range of sectors, including manufacturing, agriculture, technology, and services. The USA is a major importer of goods from the Middle East, particularly crude oil, while also exporting machinery, aircraft, pharmaceuticals, and other products to the region. Bilateral investment flows support economic development and job creation on both sides, with US companies investing in infrastructure, real estate, telecommunications, and other key sectors in the Middle East. The financial and banking sectors play a crucial role in facilitating business relations between the USA and the Middle East. Major US financial institutions have

a presence in the Middle East, providing a range of services such as investment banking, asset management, and corporate finance. Conversely, Middle Eastern sovereign wealth funds and institutional investors are active players in US financial markets, investing in equities, bonds, real estate, and private equity ventures. Technology and innovation have emerged as promising areas for collaboration between the USA and the Middle East. Both regions boast vibrant tech ecosystems, with Silicon Valley serving as a global hub for innovation and the Middle East witnessing a surge in tech startups and digital transformation initiatives. Partnerships in areas such as artificial intelligence, cyber security, e-commerce, and renewable energy hold immense potential for driving economic growth and fostering entrepreneurship. Infrastructure development is a key driver of economic growth and competitiveness in the Middle East, presenting opportunities for US companies to participate in major projects. Investments in transportation, logistics, construction, and urban development projects are essential for modernizing infrastructure and enhancing connectivity within the region. US firms bring expertise in engineering, project management, and technology solutions to support the development of sustainable infrastructure in the Middle East. In conclusion, the business relations between the USA and the Middle East are characterized by a diverse array of opportunities and collaborations across various sectors. As both regions seek to harness their respective strengths and navigate global challenges, fostering strategic partnerships and economic cooperation will remain paramount. By leveraging innovation, promoting trade and investment, and fostering mutual trust and understanding, the USA and the Middle East can build resilient and mutually beneficial business relations that contribute to sustainable growth and



prosperity for years to come.

Strengthening Ties: Energy Cooperation between the USA and Iraq

Energy cooperation between the United States and Iraq holds strategic significance for both nations, encompassing a wide range of activities spanning oil production, infrastructure development, investment, and technical collaboration. As Iraq seeks to modernize its energy sector and enhance production capacity, while the United States looks to diversify its energy sources and strengthen bilateral relations, the partnership between the two countries in the energy domain is evolving. In this article, we explore the dynamics of energy cooperation between the USA and Iraq, highlighting key initiatives, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration. Iraq possesses one of the world's largest proven oil reserves, making it a crucial player in the global energy market. The United States has been a significant importer of Iraqi oil, with trade relations dating back decades. Energy cooperation between the two countries involves

the production, refining, and export of crude oil, contributing to global energy security and stability. Despite fluctuations in oil prices and geopolitical tensions, the partnership between the USA and Iraq in the oil sector remains robust, with both countries benefiting from mutual trade and investment. Infrastructure development is a key aspect of energy cooperation between the USA and Iraq, aimed at modernizing Iraq's energy infrastructure and enhancing production capacity. US companies have been actively involved in projects related to oilfield development, pipeline construction, and refinery upgrades in Iraq. By leveraging American expertise in engineering, technology, and project management, Iraq aims to improve efficiency, reduce operational costs, and increase oil production to meet growing domestic and international demand. Investment and financing play a crucial role in supporting energy cooperation between the USA and Iraq, with US companies investing in Iraq's energy sector and providing financial assistance for in-

rastructure projects. The US government, through agencies such as the Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), offers financing and risk mitigation tools to support American companies' investments in Iraq. These investments contribute to job creation, economic development, and energy security in both countries. Technical collaboration and capacity-building initiatives are essential for enhancing Iraq's energy sector capabilities and promoting sustainable development. The United States provides technical assistance, training programs, and technology transfers to support Iraq's efforts to modernize its oil and gas industry, improve operational efficiency, and adopt best practices in environmental management and safety standards. By sharing knowledge and expertise, the USA helps build Iraq's institutional capacity and human capital in the energy sector. Diversification and renewable energy are emerging areas of cooperation between the USA and Iraq, reflecting a global shift towards sustainable energy

solutions. Iraq has significant potential for solar and wind energy development, with ambitious plans to increase renewable energy capacity and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The United States, a leader in clean energy technology and innovation, can provide valuable expertise, investment, and partnerships to support Iraq's transition to a low-carbon economy. In conclusion, energy cooperation between the USA and Iraq is a vital component of their bilateral relations, contributing to economic growth, energy security, and regional stability. By leveraging their respective strengths, resources, and expertise, both countries can further enhance collaboration in the energy sector, explore new opportunities for investment and innovation, and address common challenges related to energy production, infrastructure, and sustainability. As the global energy landscape continues to evolve, the partnership between the USA and Iraq holds immense potential for mutual benefit and shared prosperity in the years to come.

Strategies for Deterring Iraqi Militias The USA's Approach Navigating Complexity



By *Saadula Aqrabi*

I believe that the Middle East remains a region of strategic importance for the United States, characterized by a complex web of geopolitical dynamics, security challenges, and diverse interests. As the landscape continues to evolve, the US strategy in the Middle East undergoes constant reassessment, aiming to balance national interests, promote stability, and address pressing global issues. We can delve into the multifaceted nature of the US strategy in the Middle East, examining key priorities, challenges, and recent developments shaping American policy in the region. We know that the US strategy in the Middle East is guided by several key priorities and objectives. Counterterrorism efforts remain a top priority for the United States. The fight against extremist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda continues to be a central focus, with a particular emphasis on preventing the resurgence of these organizations and disrupting their networks. The United States seeks to promote stability and security in the Middle East to safeguard its interests and those of its allies. This includes efforts to mitigate conflicts, prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and address humanitarian crises.

I believe that the Middle East is marked by complex regional rivalries, including those between Iran and its Gulf Arab neighbors, as well as between various sectarian and ethnic groups. The US strategy aims to navigate these dynamics carefully, balancing engagement with different actors while preventing escalation and instability. Diplomatic engagement is a cornerstone of the US strategy in the Middle East. The United States actively supports efforts to resolve conflicts through peaceful means, including negotiations and mediation, while advocating for human rights and democratic governance. Recent develop-

ments have introduced new challenges and considerations into the US strategy in the Middle East.

The Biden administration's efforts to revive the Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, have significant implications for US policy in the region. Negotiating a return to the agreement while addressing concerns over Iran's regional activities and ballistic missile program remains a complex diplomatic challenge. Ongoing conflicts and instability in countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Libya pose persistent challenges to regional stability. The United States continues to support diplomatic efforts to resolve these conflicts while providing humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of affected populations. The Middle East is witnessing significant geopolitical shifts, including the normalization of relations between Israel and several Arab states, as well as increasing involvement from countries such as Russia and China. I think that the United States must navigate these changes while safeguarding its interests and alliances in the region. Energy dynamics in the Middle East, including fluctuations in oil prices and the transition to renewable energy sources, have implications for US policy. The United States seeks to maintain stability in energy markets while promoting sustainable energy practices and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Looking ahead, several considerations will shape the future direction of US strategy in the Middle East. The United States must balance its various priorities in the region, including counterterrorism efforts, managing regional rivalries, and promoting peace and stability. Finding the right balance will require careful diplomacy and strategic decision-making. The debate over the level of US engagement in the Middle East contin-

ues, with some advocating for a more limited role and others emphasizing the importance of continued involvement. The Biden administration's approach, which seeks to recalibrate US commitments while remaining actively engaged, reflects this balancing act. Multilateral cooperation will be essential in addressing regional challenges effectively. The United States must work closely with allies and partners in the Middle East, as well as international organizations and regional forums, to advance common interests and objectives. The US strategy in the Middle East is a complex and multifaceted endeavor, shaped by evolving geopolitical dynamics, regional challenges, and global imperatives. As the region continues to navigate uncertainty and change, the United States must adapt its approach to promote stability, advance its interests, and contribute to peace and prosperity in the Middle East. By balancing diplomacy, strategic engagement, and multilateral cooperation, the United States can navigate the complexities of the region and contribute to positive outcomes for all stakeholders involved. The relationship further deteriorated with the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which culminated in the overthrow of the Shah and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The storming of the US Embassy in Tehran and the subsequent hostage crisis, where 52 Americans were held captive for 444 days, further strained diplomatic ties. One of the primary sources of contention between the two nations has been Iran's nuclear program. The USA, along with its allies, has accused Iran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons under the guise of a civilian energy program, a charge vehemently denied by Tehran. This led to the imposition of stringent economic sanctions

on Iran, exacerbating tensions and fueling a cycle of retaliation. Iran's role as a regional powerbroker in the Middle East has often clashed with American interests, particularly in conflicts such as the Syrian Civil War, the Yemeni Civil War, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Iran's support for militant groups like Hezbollah and Hamas has been a point of contention for the USA and its allies in the region.

We can see that the USA and Iran have frequently found themselves on opposing sides of various proxy conflicts, with Iran backing Shia militias in Iraq and Syria, while the USA supports Sunni Arab states in the region. This has fueled instability and violence in countries already ravaged by war and insurgency. The USA has repeatedly condemned Iran's human rights record, including its suppression of political dissent, crackdown on journalists and activists, and harsh treatment of religious and ethnic minorities. These concerns have further strained diplomatic relations and contributed to international condemnation of Iran's government.

Yes, despite this escalation, both countries have shown some willingness to engage in diplomacy, particularly with the election of Joe Biden as President of the United States. The Biden administration has expressed a desire to reengage with Iran diplomatically and reenter the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, from which the USA withdrew in 2018 under the Trump administration. The relationship between the USA and Iran is characterized by a long history of mistrust, animosity, and conflict. While recent developments offer some hope for diplomatic resolution, the underlying issues driving the tensions between these two nations remain deeply entrenched. Achieving lasting peace and stability in the region will require

sustained dialogue, compromise, and a willingness to address the root causes of the USA-Iran conflicts. The presence of Iraqi militias poses a significant challenge to both the stability of Iraq and the broader security interests of the United States in the Middle East. These militias have been involved in a range of activities from combatting ISIS to exerting influence over Iraqi politics. In response, the USA has employed a combination of military, diplomatic, and economic measures to deter and contain these militias while supporting the Iraqi government in asserting its authority. I believe that one of the primary tools in the USA's arsenal for deterring Iraqi militias has been military operations, often conducted in coordination with Iraqi security forces. These operations aim to disrupt militia activities, degrade their capabilities, and deter future aggression. Examples include targeted airstrikes against militia positions, raids to capture or eliminate militia leaders, and the deployment of special operations forces to advise and assist Iraqi units.

Of course, the central to the USA's strategy is the bolstering of Iraqi security forces to enable them to effectively counter the threat posed by militias. This support takes various forms, including training, equipment provision, intelligence sharing, and logistical assistance. By enhancing the capabilities of Iraqi security forces, the USA aims to reduce reliance on militias for security and strengthen the Iraqi government's control over its territory. In addition to military measures, the USA engages in diplomatic efforts to address the root causes of militia activity and promote stability in Iraq. This includes diplomatic pressure on Iran to cease its support for Iraqi militias, engagement with the Iraqi government to strengthen governance and address grievances that fuel militia recruitment, and co-

ordination with regional allies to foster a united front against destabilizing actors in Iraq. The economic sanctions have also been employed as a tool to deter Iraqi militias and their backers. The USA has imposed targeted sanctions on individuals and entities affiliated with Iraqi militias, as well as on Iranian entities suspected of providing support to these groups. These sanctions aim to disrupt sources of funding and supply for militias, impose costs on their supporters, and incentivize compliance with international norms and standards.

Recognizing that the threat posed by Iraqi militias extends beyond Iraq's borders, the USA engages in regional coordination efforts to address the broader security implications. This includes cooperation with neighboring countries, such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states, to enhance border security, counter illicit arms trafficking, and prevent the spread of extremism and instability across the region.

I believe that the Deterring Iraqi militias is a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires a comprehensive approach encompassing military, diplomatic, economic, and regional measures. By leveraging its military capabilities, supporting Iraqi security forces, engaging diplomatically, imposing economic sanctions, and coordinating regionally, the USA seeks to contain the influence of militias, strengthen the Iraqi state, and promote stability in the Middle East. However, achieving these objectives will require sustained effort, adaptability, and cooperation with both regional partners and the Iraqi government. The relationship between the United States and Iran has been fraught with tension and conflict for decades, marked by a complex interplay of political, ideological, and strategic factors.



Revitalizing Iraq's Higher Education; Paving the Way for Global Excellence in Quality through Accreditation Systems

By *Dr. Mwafaq Ramzi*

Iraq's higher education system has a rich heritage producing distinguished scholars and professionals. Nevertheless, it confronts obstacles that impede its potential to achieve global acclaim. Urgent attention is required to address issues such as deteriorating infrastructure, outdated curricula, inadequate emphasis on research a disconnect between education and job markets, governance concerns, and graduates lacking skills. To tackle these challenges effectively there is a need to establish robust quality assurance mechanisms with the implementation of an efficient accreditation system being a vital solution. This article aims to demystify this journey by outlining steps exploring potential challenges while highlighting great opportunities. Armed with this knowledge and tools for success you will understand how developing an accreditation system serves as a mechanism for ensuring educational institutions meet quality standards. It provides a framework for improvement while fostering innovation and accountability. For Iraq specifically, an accreditation system could bridge the gap between the state of higher education and global benchmarks of quality excellence. The world of accreditation can be intricate as numerous agencies operate at national and international levels – each, with their own set of standards and procedures catering to specific program types and geographic areas. Accreditation bodies such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in the United States or the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the United Kingdom are known examples. Before you begin your accreditation journey it is crucial to identify the agency for your institution and programs. The key elements of an accreditation system consist of (1) standards; These serve as the foundation of any accreditation system. Should be comprehensive covering all aspects of an institution's operations, including governance, faculty qualifications, curriculum, student services, and infrastructure. (2) evaluation; A thorough evaluation process

is vital to assess whether institutions meet these established standards. This process should be transparent, objective, and evidence-based. It should involve self-evaluation by the institution itself along with review by a team of experts. (3) recognition; Once an institution successfully meets these standards it is granted accreditation status. This recognition acts as a testament to the institution's dedication to quality and continuous improvement. (4) monitoring; Accreditation is not a one-time event; regular monitoring ensures that institutions maintain these standards and strive for enhancement. Once you have identified the accrediting body, conducting a comprehensive self-evaluation becomes essential. This review process allows you to evaluate how well your institution aligns with the agency's established standards in areas such as curriculum, qualifications of faculty, support services for students, and learning outcomes. Implementing an accreditation system in Iraq would require an effort from various stakeholders including government agencies, educational institutions, faculty members, students, and the community. For instance, (1) Government's Role; The government should establish an accreditation agency that is responsible for setting standards, conducting evaluations granting accreditation status, and overseeing institutions. (2) Institutional Responsibility; Institutions should view the accreditation process as an opportunity for self-improvement. They should actively participate in all stages of the process, from self-assessment to implementing recommendations for enhancement. (3) Involvement of Faculty and Students; Faculty members and students have a role in the accreditation process, their input and feedback are invaluable when assessing the quality of education and identifying areas where improvements can be made. (4) Engagement with the Community; The community including employers and alumni should also be involved in the accreditation process. Their perspectives can offer insights into how relevant and applicable the curriculum is. Accredita-



tion standards usually cover five areas; (a) Mission and Goals; It's crucial to have a clear mission statement and specific goals that align with the overall direction of the institution. (b) Curriculum; The design, content, and delivery methods of the curriculum should effectively achieve learning outcomes. For instance, in education, problem-based learning approaches are often used to actively involve students in simulated clinical scenarios helping them develop essential skills. (c) Faculty; The qualifications, experience, and continuous professional development of faculty members are carefully examined. Some institutions prioritize hiring faculty with industry expertise to ensure program relevance and alignment with workforce needs. (d) Student Support Services; Providing support services such as academic advising, career counseling, and disability services is crucial for facilitating student success. The process of accreditation involves conducting a self-evaluation, followed by submitting a formal application to the accrediting agency of your choice. This application includes a self-study report that outlines how your institution adheres to the established standards. The accrediting agency then assigns a team of peer reviewers who visit your institution to conduct an evaluation. Based on their assessment, the agency decides on accreditation, which could result in it being granted, requiring action, or being denied altogether.

Throughout the accreditation journey, there are challenges and considerations to keep in mind. Limited

resources, ensuring faculty compliance with standards, and navigating agency requirements can present significant obstacles. However, proactive planning, communication with stakeholders, and seeking guidance from experienced consultants can help alleviate these challenges. It's important to note that accreditation is not merely a one-time achievement but it marks the beginning of an ongoing commitment to maintaining quality. Regular self-evaluation efforts and continuous improvement initiatives are crucial in sustaining status. Additionally, addressing any feedback provided by the accrediting agency plays a role.

Academic accreditation offers benefits as well. Firstly, it serves as an assurance of quality since accredited institutions undergo evaluations. It signifies that they provide education and adhere to recognized operational standards. Furthermore, accreditation is vital for transferring credits between educational institutions.

Financial Assistance: Many forms of financial aid require that the institution or program holds accreditation. Job opportunities: Employers often prefer to hire graduates from accredited programs. Continuous improvement: Accredited institutions are dedicated to improving and undergo regular reviews to maintain quality standards. Enhancing outcomes and reducing risks; In healthcare education, accreditation plays a crucial role in improving patient outcomes and mitigating risks. Identifying strengths and areas for improvement; Accred-

itation helps identify both strengths and areas for improvement in programs and processes. Enhancing communication and empowering staff; Accreditation fosters communication and empowers staff members across organizations. Cultivating a culture of quality and safety; Accreditation nurtures a culture centered around quality assurance and safety. There are types of accreditation bodies, each with their own specific purpose. Here are some examples. accreditation bodies: These bodies operate within a designated geographical area accrediting academic institutions in their region. They are widely recognized for their standards. Professional accreditation bodies: These bodies accredit specific study programs often within professions or disciplines ensuring they meet professional standards. National accreditation bodies: These bodies accredit institutions nationwide, often focusing on specific types of colleges such as trade schools, technical institutions, religious colleges, or online institutions. Accreditation Bodies on a scale play a crucial role in assessing and accrediting educational institutions. Their main objective is to ensure that these institutions meet recognized standards of quality and excellence. These bodies have functions, including evaluating academic institutions to ensure they offer high-quality education programs that equip students for success in their chosen fields. They also work towards ensuring that the fees paid by students are utilized for classes and training that can help them build thriving careers in their desired

industries. Additionally, accreditation bodies maintain the standards of colleges and universities by conducting reassessments aiming to uphold competence, impartiality, and performance capability. It's important to note that the specific functions of an accreditation body may vary depending on its type and the specific standards it upholds. Establishing an accreditation system is a significant step towards elevating Iraq's higher education to meet global benchmarks of quality excellence. Despite the challenges involved the benefits are improved education quality, enhanced reputation, and increased opportunities for students, making this endeavor truly worthwhile. By working all parties involved can contribute to the development of an accreditation system in Iraq that not only ensures high quality but also encourages a culture of ongoing improvement and innovation in higher education. The establishment of accreditation requires dedication, careful planning, and a comprehensive understanding of the process. By navigating the accreditation landscape, conducting thorough self-evaluations and demonstrating adherence to established standards educational institutions can attain this sought-after mark of excellence. This achievement will enhance their reputation, attract students and lay the foundation for growth and success. It's important to remember that accreditation is not merely an end goal but rather an ongoing commitment, to maintaining standards.



Building a Democratic Community in the Middle East Challenges and Opportunities

By *Roger Corregon*

The aspiration for democracy in the Middle East has long been a topic of global significance, marked by both progress and setbacks. As the region grapples with complex political dynamics, social upheavals, and external interventions, the pursuit of democratic principles remains a fundamental goal for many. This article explores the challenges and opportunities in building a democratic community in the Middle East, highlighting the essential steps needed to foster inclusive governance, protect human rights, and promote civic participation. The legacy of authoritarianism, colonialism, and external interference has shaped the political landscape of the Middle East, hindering the development of democratic institutions and practices. Deep-seated power structures and entrenched elites often resist democratic reforms, perpetuating autocratic rule. The region's volatile security environment, fueled by conflicts, insurgencies, and foreign interventions, undermines efforts to establish stable and democratic governance. Prolonged conflicts in countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Libya have exacerbated humanitarian crises and hindered democratic progress. Socio-cultural factors, including tribalism, sectarianism, and religious extremism, pose significant challenges to democratic development. Divisions along ethnic, religious, and ideological lines often exacerbate social tensions and impede efforts to build inclusive political systems. Economic disparities, unemployment, and poverty contribute to social unrest and political discontent, undermining the prospects for democratic consolidation. Corrupt practices, lack of transparency, and unequal distribution of resources further erode public trust in government institutions. The region's youthful population presents a demographic dividend for democratic progress. Young people, equipped with education and technology, are increasingly demanding political change and actively engaging in civil society initiatives, advocating for greater transparency and accountability. Civil society organizations play a vital

role in advancing democratic values and holding governments accountable. Empowering grassroots movements, promoting media freedom, and protecting the rights of activists are essential for building a vibrant civil society sector. Strengthening the rule of law, judicial independence, and institutional frameworks is crucial for democratic development. Reforms aimed at enhancing electoral processes, decentralizing power, and protecting fundamental rights can foster a more inclusive and participatory political environment. Regional cooperation and dialogue are essential for addressing common challenges and promoting democratic norms. Initiatives such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council provide platforms for collaboration on governance issues, electoral reform, and conflict resolution. International support and assistance can bolster democratic transitions in the Middle East. Through diplomatic engagement, capacity-building programs, and development assistance, the international community can provide resources and expertise to strengthen democratic institutions and promote democratic values. Building a democratic community in the Middle East is a complex and multifaceted endeavor, requiring sustained efforts, political will, and collaboration at the local, regional, and international levels. While the challenges are formidable, the region's rich history, diverse societies, and aspirations for freedom and dignity offer hope for democratic advancement. By addressing underlying socio-economic grievances, empowering civil society actors, and fostering inclusive governance, the Middle East can chart a path towards a more democratic and prosperous future. Only through collective action and a steadfast commitment to democratic principles can the region overcome its challenges and realize its full potential as a democratic community. A civil community stands as a testament to the collective strength and harmony of its members. Rooted in shared values, mutual respect, and active participation, such



communities foster inclusivity, cooperation, and a sense of belonging among individuals. In this article, we delve into the essential factors that contribute to the formation and sustenance of a civil community, examining the building blocks that underpin social cohesion and unity. At the heart of every civil community lie shared values and ethics that guide interactions and shape collective behavior. These values, which may include principles of respect, tolerance, integrity, and compassion, serve as the foundation upon which trust and cooperation are built. By upholding a common ethical framework, community members cultivate a sense of solidarity and commitment to the greater good. Open and effective communication is vital for fostering understanding, resolving conflicts, and building consensus within a civil community. Encouraging dialogue, active listening, and constructive engagement enables individuals to express their viewpoints, address grievances, and collaborate on collective goals. By creating spaces for meaningful discourse, communities promote inclusivity and empower diverse voices to contribute to decision-making processes. Social cohesion, characterized by a sense of unity and belonging, is a hallmark of a civil community. Communities that embrace diversity, respect individual differences, and actively include marginalized groups foster a culture of inclusivity and acceptance. By celebrating cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity, communities enrich their

social fabric and strengthen bonds among members. Civic engagement lies at the core of a civil community, as active participation in civic affairs empowers individuals to shape the destiny of their communities. Through volunteering, community organizing, and political activism, individuals contribute to the common good, address social issues, and hold institutions accountable. By fostering a culture of civic responsibility, communities empower citizens to become agents of positive change. Transparent and accountable governance mechanisms are essential for ensuring fairness, justice, and equity within a civil community. Democratic principles, such as the rule of law, separation of powers, and respect for human rights, provide the framework for effective governance and decision-making. By upholding democratic values and institutions, communities safeguard individual freedoms and promote the rule of law. Strong social support networks provide a safety net for community members during times of hardship and adversity. By offering emotional, financial, and practical assistance, these networks foster resilience and solidarity among individuals. Communities that prioritize mutual aid, cooperation, and collective welfare build bonds of trust and reciprocity that strengthen social cohesion. Education serves as a catalyst for personal growth, social mobility, and intellectual enrichment within a civil community. By investing in quality education and lifelong learning opportuni-

ties, communities empower individuals to reach their full potential, foster critical thinking skills, and promote informed citizenship. Education also serves as a bridge across generations, transmitting values, knowledge, and cultural heritage to future generations. In conclusion, the factors of a civil community encompass a diverse array of elements that contribute to social harmony, cooperation, and collective well-being. By embracing shared values, promoting inclusivity, fostering civic engagement, and upholding democratic principles, communities create environments where individuals thrive and flourish. As we navigate the complexities of the modern world, the importance of building and sustaining civil communities cannot be overstated. Through concerted efforts and a steadfast commitment to these fundamental factors, communities can forge pathways to a more equitable, resilient, and prosperous future for all. Building civil society is complex and somewhat diverse, but it is important and essential for expressing the unheard-of people by strengthening local participation in political decision-making and service provision. In addition, it is considered the third sector of society alongside government and business. It also supports United Nations civil societies because they advance the ideals of the entire organization. The term civil society began to appear in the 1980s through non-governmental movements opposed to authoritarian regimes in political

and economic discussions. Civil society has sufficient power to influence policy makers, and is in constant development as a result of technological developments and changes that occur constantly, such as: Amnesty International and the Fund. WWF and the International Trade Union Confederation. These organizations also differ depending on their size, foundation, and policies. There are international non-governmental organizations, mass movements, and small and local organizations, and cooperation for survival is one of their most important goals through social practices and coordination between them. In several ancient and contemporary ways. The term civil society is considered a global term, especially after the emergence of modern democracy movements, as they work to stimulate political life and find solutions to social problems. It reflects a number of concepts and ideas in the modern era, the most important of which are pluralism and social benefit. Which is important in order to improve conditions in the world and block what prevents them from being achieved. Such as fanaticism, threats to freedom of action and belief, and others, but it is considered a somewhat difficult idea to achieve, but the communication of individuals with each other, starting with the family and ending with the state, through a network of values and morals, leaves a positive impression about the ability of individuals to change through participation in private and public life.

THE CITY OF MY DREAMS



By Jawad Qadir

Erbil: Age of Growth

With utmost precision, my taxi driver smoothly maneuvered the vehicle onto the recently constructed 150-meter highway, all while maintaining a composed demeanor. In a tranquil tone, he proceeded to tell his story. "And then, I built a considerably spacious house for my family," he said. "Every single endeavor, including this very taxi, was accomplished solely through the earnings I acquired from my profession," he proudly assured. "There was money to be made, mamosta; plenty of it," he told me, utilizing the respectful term 'mamosta' commonly employed in Erbil to address unfamiliar individuals.

In the years that followed the over-

throw of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the cities within the Kurdistan Region saw unprecedented expansion. This was particularly evident in Erbil, which underwent a remarkable transformation from a moderately sized city in the 1990s to a bustling metropolis over the course of three decades. Roads, bridges, and transportation systems were upgraded and expanded to accommodate the growing population and increased economic activity. The city's airport was also modernized and expanded, facilitating international travel and trade. Furthermore, Erbil experienced a cultural renaissance during this period. The city became a hub for arts, culture, and education, attracting artists, intel-

lectuals, and students from all over the region. Museums, art galleries, and educational institutions were established, contributing to the city's intellectual and cultural vibrancy.

"I easily made 100 dollars a day just by driving this car," the taxi driver said. "I could pay for my kids' school and buy them things they needed."

It comes as no surprise that my taxi driver held a deep sense of nostalgia for the years that ensued after Saddam's ousting in 2003. The Kurdistan Board of Investments reports an astounding \$66 billion influx of investments into the region, propelling economic growth to an impressive 10% for a significant portion of the past twenty years. This

economic upturn provided newfound opportunities for previously disadvantaged segments of the Kurdish society, enabling them to secure employment, earn a livelihood, and reap the benefits of the flourishing economy. Despite the setbacks caused by the ISIS conflict and budget disagreements with Baghdad, the region's economic growth has once again reached its zenith in recent years. Nevertheless, the sustained economic expansion in the region, and in Iraq, hinges upon the ability of Erbil and Baghdad to discover shared interests and address their challenges.

Erbil Honors Kurdish Artist Mohammed Abbas Bahram

"Bahram's impact, particularly stemming from his roots in Kirkuk, has played a crucial role in defining the cultural identity of the region,"

The General Directorate of Culture and Arts of Erbil, in conjunction with the Kurdistan Satellite Agency, recently held a ceremony to pay tribute to the renowned Kurdish artist, Mohammed Abbas Bahram. This significant event saw the attendance of various artists, political figures, and government officials, all gathered to celebrate Bahram's artistic contributions.

Farhang Ghafoor, the Director General of Culture and Arts of Erbil, shared his thoughts on this occasion. He stated, "Today, on this red carpet, we warmly welcome you, dear teacher. You have been a beacon of inspiration for Kurdistan." Ghafoor further elaborated that Bahram's influence, especially from Kirkuk, has been pivotal in shaping the region's cultural identity. He emphasized the Directorate's commitment to recognizing and learning from the experiences



of influential cultural figures.

The Governor of Erbil, Omed Khoshnaw, also contributed to the accolades, highlighting Bahram's deserving nature for respect and admiration. He mentioned, "Erbil honors an artist

who deserves respect and appreciation." Khoshnaw also emphasized the city's tradition of respecting artists and their contributions, expressing his gratitude to the cultural institutions for their role in selecting Bahram for this honor.

Artist's Journey and Impact

Mohammed Abbas Bahram, born in Kirkuk, began his artistic journey in painting and pursued higher education at the Institute of Fine

Arts. Despite relocating abroad, he maintained his passion, eventually becoming an academic and pursuing a master's degree. In his speech, Bahram said, "I welcome my dear friends and artists... I feel like I've been born again." He ex-

pressed immense joy and gratitude for the support and recognition from the Kurdish community and reminisced about his connections with other Kurdish artists.

A Lifetime of Artistic Endeavor

Born in 1952 in Kirkuk's Tapay Mullah Abdullah neighborhood, Bahram's artistic journey was marked by his graduation from the music department of the Baghdad Institute of Fine Arts in the early 1970s. Known for his piano skills and Western singing style, he lived abroad for many years before returning to Kurdistan. His homecoming was marked by recognition from the General Directorate of Culture and Arts in Erbil, in coordination with the Kurdistan Satellite Agency, honoring his artistic legacy.

Ankawa: A Melting Pot of Tradition and Modernity



Celebrating Diversity and Tradition in the Heart of Kurdistan Region

Ankawa is right in the middle of Erbil, Iraq, and it's known for its Christian history in a mainly Kurdish area. It's a cool mix of old traditions and modern life, making it more than just a regular town. It's got neat streets, important religious spots, and friendly people, which attracts tourists and locals who love their history.

A Quick History of Ankawa

Ankawa has a long history. It started as a small Assyrian village and grew into a big, busy place. Most people living here are Chaldeans and Assyrians, and they've kept their Christian traditions alive through lots of changes and different rulers. Today, Ankawa shows how you can keep

old traditions while living in modern times.

Life in Ankawa

Ankawa is a place where old and new things mix well. Walking around, you'll see old buildings and new cafes side by side. People here care a lot about their community, family, and religious beliefs. They love their festivals and religious rituals and events, and everyone's welcome to join. Mariam, who's lived here forever, says, "Ankawa is full of stories. Our festivals, food, and music show off our heritage that we love and keep in our daily lives."

Coexistence in Ankawa

Ankawa is known for being a place where different kinds of people get along well, even though there are often conflicts

in the area. Christians, Muslims, and Yazidis live together, sharing spaces and celebrating together. Khalid, who runs a shop, says, "Ankawa is all about community. No matter who you are, you're one of us here." This friendly vibe is everywhere in town, where everyone's differences are celebrated.

Business and Making Money

Ankawa's business scene is as diverse as its culture. The town's been growing, especially with more tourists coming in. You'll find traditional markets with handmade stuff and modern shops with big brands. Sara, who owns a souvenir shop, says, "Tourists have made Ankawa more lively. We see new people every day." This boost in

tourism helps the local businesses and creates more jobs.

Ankawa is a lively area known for its great food places. It's a favorite spot for both people who live nearby and visitors. This place is full of different kinds of restaurants and cafes. You can find all sorts of tastes here, from local dishes to food from around the world. A restaurant owner says, "We make local food in a new way, so it's both real and fresh." The cafes are just as nice, perfect for sitting and chatting. "Our café is like a cozy meeting spot where everyone enjoys their coffee," a café owner adds. Ankawa's eating spots are all about good food and friendly faces, showing off the area's mix of old and new styles.

Religion in Ankawa

Religion is a big part of life in Ankawa. There are lots of churches, some really old, that are not just for praying but also for hanging out together. Big religious festivals are a hit, drawing people from all over. A local resident says, "Our faith is super important. It's what guides us and brings us together." The town also has events for different religions, showing respect and friendship among everyone.

What It's Like to Live in the town

People in Ankawa have different views on living here. Layla, who moved here for work, says, "Ankawa makes you feel like you belong." Older folks talk about how the

town has changed but like the new energy. Younger people see it as a place full of chances, respecting the past but looking forward to the future. George, a student, says, "Ankawa is more than just our home. It's our identity, history, and dreams." These views show Ankawa as a place where old and new, history and dreams, come together.

Ankawa stands out in Erbil as a place that holds onto its roots while being open to new things and people. It's a great spot for visitors to see a unique mix of cultures and for locals, it's a source of pride and hope. Ankawa is more than just a town; it's about the people and their strong commitment to a shared future.

Kurdish language renaissance: leveraging technology for global recognition and Standardization

The Kurdish language, a beacon of cultural heritage and identity for millions across the Middle East, stands at a critical juncture in its journey towards recognition and standardization on the global stage. Spoken by Kurdish communities dispersed across Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, Kurdish faces numerous challenges, including historical suppression and the absence of standardized norms. However, recent years have seen significant efforts to promote the preservation and standardization of Kurdish, with technology playing an increasingly pivotal role in advancing these objectives.

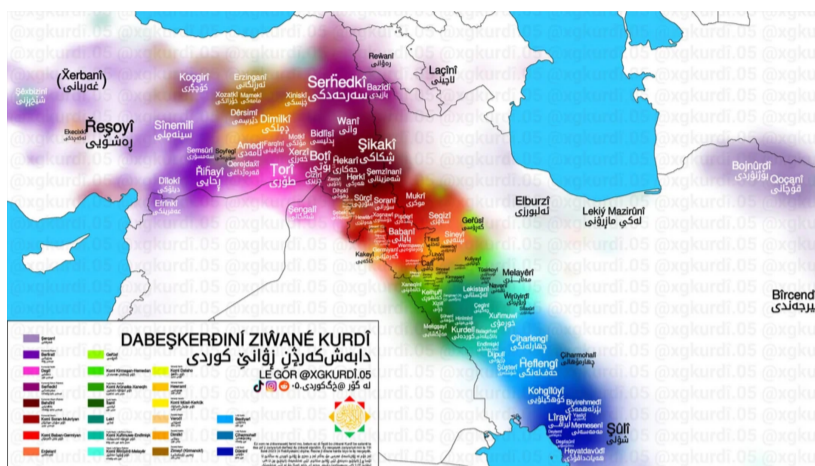
At the heart of the Kurdish language's current status lies its linguistic diversity, encompassing various dialects such as Kurmanji, Sorani, and Gorani, each with its own unique features and regional variations. Despite this richness, Kurdish has historically faced marginalization and suppression, with governments in the region imposing bans on Kurdish language education and cultural expression.

Central to the endeavor for standardization is the utilization of technology as a catalyst for linguistic innovation and empowerment. In recent years, technological advancements have opened up new avenues for the preservation and promotion of Kurdish, offering solutions to longstanding challenges such as the absence of standardized language norms and educational resources.

One significant aspect of technology's role in the standardization of Kurdish is the development of digital resources and tools tailored to the needs of Kurdish speakers. Online dictionaries, grammar guides, and language-learning platforms have become increasingly accessible, providing Kurdish learners with valuable resources for language acquisition and proficiency. Additionally, digital libraries and archives have made Kurdish literature and cultural materials more widely available, facilitating the dissemination and preservation of Kurdish heritage.

Furthermore, technology has played a pivotal role in facilitating communication and collaboration among Kurdish speakers dispersed across different regions and countries. Social media platforms and messaging apps have enabled Kurdish communities to connect, share ideas, and mobilize for collective action, fostering a sense of unity and solidarity among speakers. Moreover, digital communication tools have facilitated the exchange of linguistic knowledge and expertise, empowering Kurdish language scholars and educators to collaborate on standardization efforts.

The Kurdish language has historically faced challenges in the digital sphere, particularly with regards to technology giants like Google. Despite being spoken by millions worldwide, Kurdish has often been overlooked or under-represented in major digital platforms, including Google's suite of services. However, in recent years, there have been significant strides towards improving the presence and accessibility of Kurdish language content online, thanks in part to grassroots efforts and



Division of the Kurdish language varieties

advocacy campaigns.

For a long time, Kurdish speakers encountered difficulties in utilizing Google's services fully due to the lack of support for the Kurdish language. This meant limited access to features such as search, translation, and content creation in Kurdish. As a result, Kurdish users often had to rely on other languages or platforms, leading to a sense of marginalization and frustration within the Kurdish-speaking community.

However, there has been a noticeable shift in recent years as Google has begun to recognize the importance of supporting previously-marginalized languages, including Kurdish, on its platforms. One significant development was the introduction of Kurdish language support in Google Translate, allowing users to translate text to and from Kurdish across multiple languages. This has been a game-changer for Kurdish speakers, facilitating communication and access to information in their native language like never before.

Furthermore, initiatives such as the Google Kurdish Initiative have emerged to promote the development of Kurdish language resources and tools online. This collaborative effort between Google and Kurdish language experts aims to expand the presence of Kurdish content on the internet and improve the quality of Kurdish language technology.

Another area where Kurdish language support has seen progress is in the realm of digital content creation. Platforms like YouTube, owned by Google, now offer tools and resources for Kurdish content creators to produce and share videos in Kurdish. This has not only empowered Kurdish creators to express themselves in their native language but has also helped to foster a sense of community and cultural pride among Kurdish speakers worldwide.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in fully integrating Kurdish language support across all Google platforms and services. Issues such as dialectal variations and the need for more comprehensive language resources continue to be addressed by ongoing efforts within the Kurdish language community and technology companies like Google.

In addition, technology has also opened up new opportunities for the promotion of Kurdish language and

culture in media and entertainment. Digital media platforms and streaming services have provided a platform for Kurdish filmmakers, musicians, and artists to showcase their work to a global audience, amplifying the visibility and impact of Kurdish cultural expression. Social media influencers and content creators have leveraged digital platforms to share stories and perspectives that celebrate Kurdish identity and heritage, fostering pride and solidarity among Kurdish speakers worldwide.

However, despite the progress made in utilizing technology for the standardization and promotion of Kurdish, significant challenges remain. Access to technology and digital infrastructure remains uneven across Kurdish communities, particularly in rural or under-served areas. Additionally, linguistic diversity within the Kurdish language poses challenges to standardization efforts, as different dialects may have divergent grammar rules, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Moreover, the digital divide, impaired by factors such as socio-economic incongruences and political instability, may hinder access to technology and digital resources for marginalized Kurdish communities. Addressing these challenges will require an intensive effort to ensure equitable access to technology and digital literacy training, as well as targeted initiatives to develop and disseminate Kurdish language resources tailored to the needs of diverse Kurdish speakers.

In short, the current status of the Kurdish language reflects both its resilience in the face of historical suppression and its ongoing quest for recognition and standardization. Technology has emerged as a powerful ally in this endeavor, offering innovative solutions to longstanding challenges and empowering Kurdish communities to preserve and promote their linguistic and cultural heritage. By leveraging technology effectively and addressing the digital divide, we can harness the full potential of technology to support the standardization and revitalization of the Kurdish language, ensuring its rightful place among the world's languages for generations to come.

Prepared by:
Khalat A.Muhammad

Unveiling the Hidden Gems: Efforts to Translate Kurdish Classical Literature

Nestled within the mountains and valleys of Kurdistan lies a literary treasure that has remained largely undiscovered by the wider world: Kurdish classical literature. Spanning centuries of creativity and cultural richness, Kurdish literature boasts an illustrious tradition of epic poetry, mystical verse, and prose narratives that offer invaluable insights into the history, culture, and identity of the Kurdish people. Despite the significance of these literary works, an evident gap exists in their translation into other languages, hindering their accessibility and appreciation on the global stage. However, efforts are underway to bridge this gap and unlock the hidden gems of Kurdish literature for the world to discover.

Kurdish classical literature traces its origins back to ancient Mesopotamian civilizations, reflecting the diverse cultural influences that have shaped Kurdish identity over the centuries. At the heart of this literary tradition lies an oral tradition passed down through generations by storytellers known as 'dengbêj', who preserved Kurdish history, culture, and values through epic tales and lyrical poems. Epic poetry, such as the renowned "Mem û Zîn" by Ahmad Khani, recounts the heroic exploits of legendary figures and embodies the spirit of Kurdish resilience and perseverance. Love poetry celebrates the complexities of human emotions and relationships, while mystical poetry delves into the realms of spirituality and transcendence, offering readers a transformative journey of self-discovery and inner enlightenment.

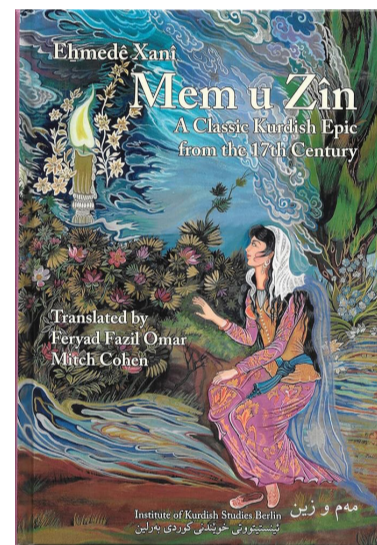
Despite the richness and cultural significance of Kurdish classical literature, a significant barrier exists in the lack of translation into other languages. This gap hinders the accessibility of Kurdish literary works to a global audience, limiting their appreciation and impact beyond the borders of Kurdistan. The reasons for this lack of translation are multifaceted and include political factors, linguistic challenges, limited resources for literary translation and qualified literary translators.

Despite these challenges, efforts are underway to bridge the gap and promote the translation of Kurdish literature in general, classical literature in particular, into other languages such as English. The Ministry of Culture and Youth in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Kurdish Writers' union, academic institutions such as universities, and cultural centers are collaborating to translate key works of Kurdish literature, raising awareness about the richness and diversity of Kurdish cultural heritage. Initiatives such as literary festivals, and international conferences provide platforms for Kurdish writers, translators, and scholars to showcase their work and collaborate on translation projects. Digital platforms and online resources facilitate the dissemination of translated Kurdish literature to a wider audience, breaking down barriers of language and geography.

The translation of Kurdish classical literature into other languages holds immense cultural and educational value, not only for Kurdish speakers but also for readers around the world. Translations enable cross-cultural exchange and dialogue, fostering understanding and appreciation of Kurdish history, culture, and identity. By making Kurdish literary works accessible to a global audience, translation contributes to the preservation and promotion of Kurdish cultural heritage, ensuring that the voices of Kurdish poets and storytellers resonate beyond the borders of Kurdistan.

Kurdish classical literature stands as a testament to the creativity, resilience, and cultural richness of the Kurdish people. Despite the challenges posed by limited translation efforts, the literary treasures of Kurdistan remain waiting to be discovered by the wider world. By supporting and promoting translation initiatives, we can unlock the hidden gems of Kurdish literature and ensure that its voices echo far and wide, enriching the global literary landscape for generations to come.

By:Dr.Bandar A.Mohammed



Erbil Soccer Club's Struggle for Survival

The Erbil Soccer Club has faced a multitude of challenges since the commencement of the Iraq Stars League, resulting in a negative impact on the team's performance and league standings. This unfortunate situation has left fans of the club disheartened, as they witness their team falter near the bottom of the league table and struggle for survival in front of their eyes.

Efforts have been made to address these problems, including the appointment of Abbas Obed as the head coach and the recruitment of additional staff to support him. Unfortunately, these changes did not lead to any improvements and may have exacerbated the club's situation.

Several players within the club have made it clear that they intend to depart from the team. They are currently exploring offers and opportunities from other soccer teams, suggesting that they are seriously contemplating the possibility of joining other clubs. This indicates a potential exodus of talents from the current club, which could further impact the team's composition and performance.

In the winter transfer window, eight players, including Aso Rostam, Mohammed Mohsin, Ala Mahawi, Frank Arhin, Bruno Bispo, Rebaz Abdullah, and Hussein Julie, have departed from Erbil soccer club.

As a result of Rebaz Abdullah and Hussein Julie leaving the club, Erbil is now left with only one goalkeeper, and they have an urgent need to sign with another goalkeeper. Ali Shakhawan is still insisting on receiving his contract advance and has refused to participate in the club's training sessions.

A special source from Erbil club, under the condition of anonymity, disclosed to The Kurdish Globe that only five players have officially departed the club and the other three are still part of the team.

Erbil was in Baghdad last week, having lost 2-1 to Quwa Al Jawiya in a friendly match. They are preparing for the remaining matches in the domestic league which was put on halt due to many players having to play for the national team in Asia Cup in Qatar.

Currently languishing in the 15th spot in the Iraqi Stars League with 12 points, Erbil's rapid descent from last season's sixth-place finish is a cause for concern.

Fans have criticized the club's management for not implementing long-term projects, such as establishing a youth academy to nurture young talents. Additionally, some players have recently voiced concerns about their financial payments, highlighting financial issues within the



This picture depicts Erbil soccer team. PRESS PHOTO

club.

Earlier this season, players have expressed frustration regarding the irregularity of their payments, highlighting that they do not receive their salaries on a consistent basis, unlike players at other clubs. The players conveyed a sense of embarrassment and disappointment, explaining that they feel uncomfortable having to repeatedly inquire about their due payments.

Fans are expressing their anger and frustration over the way the club's administration is managing the team. A group of fans gathered in front of the stadium a few days ago to call on the administration

to take the club's problems more seriously.

Barzan Hamad, a devoted Erbil club fan who has been attending games for 20 years, expressed deep disappointment in the administration's approach. He believes that simply signing a couple of new players or bringing in a new coach will not address the root issues. Hamad emphasized that the current state of the club, including the poor results and low player morale, is far from what Erbil should be. He voiced his desire for a change in the administration, suggesting that individuals who are knowledgeable about the club's problems and have a genuine passion for its

success should take over.

Amanj Ghazi, another loyal fan of the club, pointed out that there are many individuals who have been sidelined by the club but have a strong history of supporting it. Recognizing Erbil Soccer Club's rich history and potential, Ghazi emphasizes the need for a collaborative approach to steer the club back to its former glory.

Historically, Erbil has an impressive track record, having clinched the Iraqi Premier League championship four times, with their most recent triumph occurring in the 2011/12 season, where they suffered only one defeat. Additionally, Erbil holds the

distinction of being the first team from the Iraqi league to qualify for continental club competitions. In 2008, they secured a spot in the Asian Champions League, although they were unable to pass the group stage.

In the AFC Cup, Asia's secondary continental tournament, Erbil has twice finished as the runner-up, achieving this feat in the years 2012 and 2014.

During the 2016/17 season, Erbil, then was considered one of the most successful football clubs in the league, decided to withdraw from Iraq's Premier League due to financial difficulties.

Aso Rostam to Receive Offer Outside Iraq



Aso Rostam kicks the ball in an Iraqi domestic league game at the Franso Hariri Stadium. PRESS PHOTO

The Kurdish soccer player of the Iraqi national team and Erbil soccer club, Aso Rostam, has recently received two offers from two clubs from outside of Iraq and he is expected to make a decision soon to accept one of them.

With the financial situation Erbil soccer club is passing through, clubs in the Iraqi national league and outside Iraq are taking advantage of the situation, trying to tempt the players to leave their club. Rostam is one of the talented players who has been observed by many clubs.

Fans and followers of Aso Rostam will likely

be eager to see where his career takes him next, and it will be interesting to see how he will contribute to his new team, should he choose to accept one of the offers.

"I'll always cherish the moments Aso Rostam shared with us in Erbil Soccer Club. His dedication, skill, and passion on the field were second to none. While it's tough to see him go, we wish him all the best in his new journey with another club. Once a part of our team, always in our hearts." said Soran Ahmad, a fan of Erbil soccer team

Saman Saeed, another

Erbil club fan did not hide that he would be sad for his team to lose a talented player like Rostam, however, he said "If Rostam decides to move to a club outside of Iraq, it could be a significant step in his career, providing new opportunities and challenges. It's common for talented players to attract attention from clubs in different regions, especially after notable performances in international tournaments."

Rostam does not want to say anything for now until everything is getting clear and he makes his final decision.

Aso Rostam, who was born on 1 December 1994, is a Kurdish-Iraqi soccer player who played this year as a forward for Erbil in the Iraq Stars League, on loan from Al-Shorta, and the Iraq national team.

On 23 September 2022, Aso Rostam made his first international appearance with the Iraqi national team against Oman in the 2022 Jordan International Tournament. In 2023, Aso was part of the Iraqi Squad that won the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup on home soil. He scored his first international goal against Saudi Arabia in the Group stage phase of that tournament.



Dr. Tyler Fisher

The Middle East's anvil, hammer, or blacksmith

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As the Kurdish Globe reported in its last issue, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched a ballistic missile attack on a residential suburb of Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, shortly before midnight on January 15, 2024. The primary target was the residence of Peshraw Dizayee, a prominent Kurdish businessman and philanthropist. The attack resulted in at least four casualties, including Dizayee and his 11-month-old daughter Zhina, a housekeeper, and a visiting Iraqi businessman, Karam Mikhail. Dizayee's wife and two sons sustained serious injuries. The sheer force of the eleven missile blasts decimated the home and shattered windows in neighboring residences. The civilian casualties prompted swift and strong condemnation from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the international community.

KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani immediately condemned the unprovoked attack and urged Baghdad to take a firm stance against this violation of Iraq's sovereignty. Baghdad did indeed respond with forceful language and firm measures: Iraqi authorities recalled the country's ambassador from Tehran, filed an official complaint with the UN Security Council, and canceled scheduled meetings with Iran's Foreign Minister. Whether Baghdad's responses will amount to more than political theater remains to be seen.

Western nations, including the United States, the UK, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, also swiftly condemned the missile strike, expressing their opposition

to actions that "undermine Iraq's stability," in the words of the US State Department. US defense officials were also quick to counter early rumors that the attack had destroyed the US Consulate in Erbil. The "reckless and imprecise" strikes, they said, had not damaged any US facilities. Iran's methods and motives beyond the bombardment are likely, however, to be less reckless, more precise, and more strategic than the US would like to admit. Iran's assassination of a renowned Kurdish entrepreneur allows Iran to crow about conspicuous action while avoiding the direct repercussions that an attack on a more military or political target would bring.

Iran celebrated the attack as a success. Iranian state media initially claimed that the ballistic missile strikes had targeted "one of the main Mossad espionage headquarters in Iraq's Kurdistan region," headquarters allegedly directed by Dizayee, whom Iran further accused of engaging in illicit oil exports to Israel. However, purported pieces of evidence to support these claims, including manipulated photos and falsified connections, were swiftly debunked as unsubstantiated. Iraq's own National Security Advisor, Qasim al-Araji, led a high-level security delegation to the Kurdish capital to inspect the targets of the Iranian bombardment. His inspection of the sites determined that claims about the presence of a Mossad headquarters in Erbil are "baseless."

This missile strike follows a pattern of IRGC assassinations in the Kurdistan Region since September 2018, which have specifically targeted civilians and have

escalated tensions in the area. The most recent attack bears unmistakable similarities to Iran's March 2022 missile strike on the private residence of Sheikh Baz Karim Barzinji in Erbil. Sheikh Baz, the CEO of KAR Group, the largest domestic energy company in the Kurdistan Region, survived the attack, which Iran sought to justify as a defense against foreign espionage. In this and similar attacks, Iran has largely been able to act with impunity.

Against the backdrop of heightened regional tensions, marked by the killing of a senior Iranian commander in an Israeli airstrike and a terrorist attack in Iran claimed by ISIS, Iran's missile strike on Erbil adds another layer of complexity to the current geopolitical landscape. This incident highlights Iran's efforts to destabilize the Kurdish economy and instill fear, efforts inspired by the Kurds' cordial relations with Western nations and by longstanding resentment of the Kurdish separatist movements that impact Iran. As the international community reacts to this alarming event, attention is drawn to the broader implications for regional stability and the ongoing struggles of the people of Kurdistan in the face of external threats.

Iran's official pretext for the attack (that the Dizayee home was Israel's "spy headquarters" in Iraq) is entirely without merit. Erbil has been under relentless drone attacks and occasional missile barrages throughout the past year, attacks which have only increased since the Israel-Hamas war. It seems that the war is slowly spilling over. A wise Kurdish proverb says, "It is easy to catch

a serpent with someone else's hand." The present precarity underscores the very real risk that Kurdistan is at risk of becoming increasingly a proxy battleground between major powers, the kind of proxy warfare that continues to devastate Yemen. Kurdistan must not allow itself merely to be used as a hand in someone else's mad pursuit of serpents.

As I write these words, the US has launched retaliatory strikes against Iran-associated targets in Iraq and Syria, following the drone attack that killed three US Army reservists in Jordan. So far, the US airstrikes have been launched from far overseas, but US military installations in Kurdistan hold key strategic importance in this unfolding scenario. The US, for its part, will need to stop treating the Kurds as allies of mere convenience with on-again-off-again support. Air defenses and similar countermeasures to thwart Iranian aggression are also crucial to keeping Kurdistan among the most reliable allies of the US.

Another traditional Kurdish proverb says, "If you are an anvil, be patient; if you are a hammer, be strong." With reference to the current situation, I would extend this wise saying to the one who wields the hammer: while the anvil receives blows and the hammer inflicts them, Kurdistan must be the blacksmith, knowing how to use both tools. Like Kawa, the Blacksmith of legend, Kurdistan must discern when to act with shrewd restraint and when to defend itself with decisive force.



Iraqi National Security Advisor Qasim al-Araji along with the KRG interior minister Rebar Ahmed during a tour to the house of Kurdish businessman Peshraw Dizayee near Erbil that was destroyed by IRGC ballistic missiles. [Photo by Iraqi News Agency]