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Editorial

Preserving Linguistic Security: The Intrinsic Value of Mother Tongue



By | *Himdad A. Muhammad*

Language is an integral part of being human and the essence of an individual's cultural identity. It functions as a vessel through which traditions, values, and heritage are transmitted from generation to generation. Within linguistic diversity, the mother tongue stands as a cornerstone, representing a community's unique identity and collective memory. As we witness the extraordinary effects and side effects of globalization and cultural assimilation, preserving mother tongues emerges as a vital safeguard for linguistic security.

In the hearts of every Kurd, regardless of their place of living, the Kurdish language is endeared and holds a special place. Dating back to ancient history, Kurdish poets, writers, and intellectuals have woven the Kurdish identity through their works, celebrating the beauty and resilience of their mother tongue. However, in the face of external pressures and internal challenges, preserving the Kurdish language and culture remains an ongoing struggle.

Undoubtedly, the value of the mother tongue in preserving linguistic security cannot be denied. Language is not just a means of communication but more of the source of collective knowledge, wisdom, and cultural heritage of any nation and people. When a language fades away and steps towards extinction or at least does not function properly, a whole universe of thought and expression is lost, leaving a gap in the cultural landscape that cannot be easily and quickly filled.

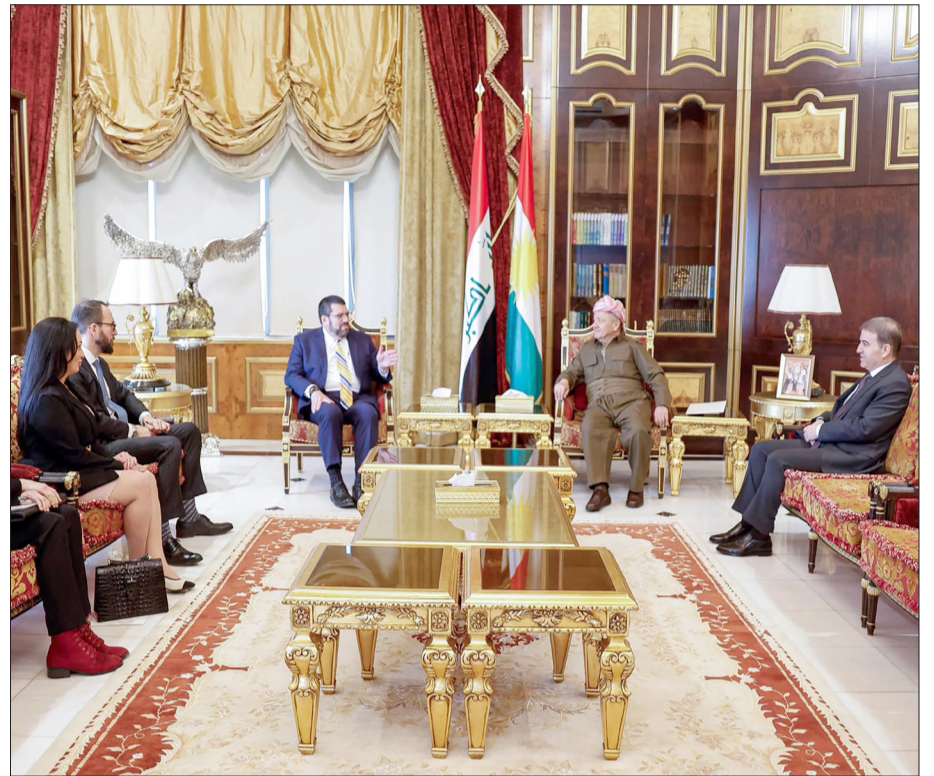
It is worth noting that the weakness of mother tongues can have intense psychological and social consequences. Language is closely connected with one's sense of identity and belonging. For many individuals, the ability to express themselves in their mother tongue is not just a matter of convenience but a fundamental human right. When linguistic diversity is threatened for any

reason and under any pretext, so is the diversity of thought, perspective, and experience that enriches humanity.

It goes without saying that the digital age imposes some dominant languages, like English, to be used as the lingua franca of communication, hence some mother tongues might undergo assimilation. Even though proficiency in global languages is undoubtedly beneficial for participation in the global economy and the exchange of ideas, it should not come at the expense of linguistic diversity and mother tongues of people and nations. Instead, it is vital to promote and encourage an environment that values and promotes multilingualism, where individuals are empowered to celebrate and preserve their mother tongues while engaging with the broader world. This case is clearly seen and implemented in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, as there are schools where the language of instruction is the mother tongue of individuals, a model that needs to be taken as a very successful model. Scientific research has also proved that knowledge is better absorbed in the mother tongue, particularly in the early stages of learning.

Finally, preserving mother tongues is not just a matter of preserving the linguistic heritage; it is a matter of protecting cultural identity, promoting diversity, and ensuring the linguistic security of future generations. It is imperative to cherish, nurture, and pass on the gift of the mother tongue to future generations. Only then can we embrace the richness and diversity of our culture and live in a more inclusive and harmonious world. Let Mother Tongue Day serve as a reminder of the invaluable treasure that is our linguistic heritage, and let us work together to ensure that the Kurdish language continues to thrive for generations to come.

President Barzani urges constitutional adherence and consensus in talks with US Acting Ambassador



KDP leader emphasizes a collective approach to coalition forces, counterterrorism, and acknowledges US's vital role in Iraq's liberation

President Massoud Barzani met with the US Acting Ambassador to Iraq, David Burger, and a delegation in Salahaddin in a diplomatic exchange addressing key regional concerns. The talks centered around the evolving situation in Iraq, the persistent threat of terrorism, relations between the Kurdistan Region and the Federal Republic of Iraq, and the challenges impeding these relations.

President Barzani emphasized the need for all parties to adhere to the constitution, a document ratified by the Iraqi people, and underscored the importance of safeguarding the status of the Kurdistan Region and its institutions. He highlighted that the legislative process in the region should remain free from unconstitutional interference. Additionally, the constitution clearly establishes the precedence of Kurdistan Region laws in case of conflicts with Iraqi Parliament laws.

Elections and political process

Addressing the broader political landscape, President Barzani asserted the necessity of holding parliamentary elections in Kurdistan, emphasizing that the electoral process should be free from any unconstitutional meddling. On electing the Iraqi parliament's speaker, he expressed a desire for con-

sensus within the Sunni community and urged cooperation among all parties for a successful election process.

National security and coalition forces

President Barzani underscored the national significance of the remaining coalition forces in Iraq, emphasizing that this issue transcends any particular community and should be addressed through official government channels.

He stressed the importance of recognizing the ongoing threat of terrorism and the potential for resurgence, urging collective support for dialogue between the Iraqi government and its allies.

President Barzani emphasized that such matters should be devoid of political bargaining, prioritizing Iraqi interests, stability, and the security of all communities.

Historical perspective

In a historical context, President Barzani acknowledged the pivotal role played by the United States in overthrowing the previous Iraqi regime and assisting in the liberation process. He emphasized that without U.S. intervention, those currently in power in Iraq would not have had the opportunity to govern the country.

Kurdistan Region seeks stability and partnership at Munich Security Conference

Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani presented the Kurdistan Region as a model of tolerance and coexistence in a region often marred by sectarian strife.

As the global security landscape trembles with escalating tensions and unresolved conflicts, the 60th Munich Security Conference provided a critical platform for world leaders and officials to convene and navigate these conflicts. Amidst this backdrop, the Kurdistan Region, represented by Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani, actively participated in shaping the dialogue, advocating for stability, and seeking international collaboration.

From February 16th to 18th, Barzani embarked on a diplomatic marathon, engaging in a series of high-level meetings that aimed to solidify the Kurdistan Region's position as a beacon of stability and a vital partner for international cooperation in a region fraught with volatility.

Kurdistan-US relations in economy, energy, and security
Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani engaged in discussions with Amos Hochstein, Senior Advisor to the US President of the United States for Energy and Investment, during the Munich Security Conference. The meeting delved into the intricacies of US relations with Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, particularly in the realms of economy, energy cooperation, and investment.

Hochstein affirmed the United States' commitment to peace and stability in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. He expressed the US's eagerness to foster opportunities and cooperation in the economic, investment, and energy sectors. The commitment to continue supporting Iraq and the Kurdistan Region was reiterated.

Crucially, both leaders addressed the security situation in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, evaluating the threat posed to coalition forces and diplomats. The impact of regional unrest in the Middle East was also a key focal point during the meeting. As the day unfolded, the leaders navigated through the complex dynamics, seeking common ground for enhanced cooperation and stability.

Kurdistan-France discuss peace in the Middle East

In a pivotal meeting, Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani engaged in high-level discussions with French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne. The primary focus of their talks centered on the volatile situation in Iraq and the broader Middle East region.

Both leaders acknowledged the

looming threat of escalating tensions in the Middle East, emphasizing the imperative to preserve peace and stability. The presidency issued a joint statement declaring their mutual commitment to exerting every effort to control the situation and address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Kurdistan Region President Barzani expressed gratitude for the enduring friendship and relations between France and the Kurdistan Region, particularly commending the role played by French President Emmanuel Macron. In response, Minister Sejourne affirmed France's ongoing support for Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, reinforcing their commitment to stability and cooperation.

The strong diplomatic ties between the Kurdistan Region and France trace back to August 2014, when the international community formed a coalition against ISIS. France emerged as the second force in the coalition, standing alongside the United States, and has maintained this collaboration to date.

Highlighting the historical support, President Macron's stance after the 2017 independence referendum was acknowledged. During that critical time, he welcomed the Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister at the Elysee Palace, emphasizing the desire for a robust Kurdistan Region within a unified Iraq.

Kurdistan-UK focus on Kurdistan's long-delayed parliamentary elections

However, Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani's agenda extended beyond addressing external threats. He also used the conference platform to shine a light on the internal situation within the Kurdistan Region. A crucial meeting with British Foreign Secretary David Cameron saw them delve into the upcoming elections in the Kurdistan Region and the broader security challenges faced by Iraq and the Middle East. Both leaders discussed the importance of holding the long-delayed elections as soon as possible to ensure political stability and legitimacy within the region.

Kurdistan-Germany discuss unifying Peshmerga forces

This focus on regional stability continued in Barzani's meeting with German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius, where he expressed appreciation for Germany's unwavering support in unifying the Peshmerga forces, a crucial element in the fight



Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani meets with Amos Hochstein, Senior Advisor to the US President of the United States for Energy and Investment, at the Munich Security Conference in Germany.

against terrorism and ensuring internal security.

Kurdistan-Vatican appreciate Region's commitment for religion freedom

Barzani's efforts at the conference extended beyond securing diplomatic and security partnerships. He actively presented the Kurdistan Region as a model of tolerance and coexistence in a region often marred by sectarian strife. In his meeting with Vatican Foreign Minister Paul Gallagher, he emphasized the Kurdistan Region's commitment to upholding the rights of all religious minorities and fostering a multicultural society. This commitment earned him praise from the Vatican for its dedication to peaceful coexistence.

Austria's Recognition: Partnering with Kurdistan Region for regional stability

Security concerns cast a long shadow over the conference, and Kurdistan Region President Barzani actively participated in addressing them. In his meeting with Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg, he underscored the Kurdistan Region's strategic importance as a "reliable partner" for Europe in navigating the complex security landscape of the Middle East. Schallenberg echoed this sentiment, highlighting the positive role the Kurdistan Region plays in promoting stability and security in the region, calling it an "important and reliable" partner for Austria.

Kurdistan-UN advocate for regional solutions

The theme of regional security resonated with Kurdistan Region President Barzani's discussions with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Both leaders acknowledged the existential threat posed by terrorism and its destabilizing impact on the region. They

emphasized the need for diplomatic solutions and regional cooperation to combat this scourge. Barzani also stressed the crucial role of the UN in mediating dialogue and facilitating peaceful resolutions to ongoing conflicts. Guterres commended the Kurdistan Region's ongoing efforts to promote peace and stability within its borders and across the region. His meeting with Antonio Guterres saw both leaders recognizing the importance of the UN playing a key role in facilitating this dialogue and finding a mutually agreeable solution.

Kurdistan-Jordan use diplomatic efforts for de-escalation tensions

Recognizing the potential for escalating tensions, Kurdistan Region President Barzani met with King Abdullah of Jordan. Both leaders underscored the importance of de-escalation efforts and the pursuit of peaceful resolutions. Barzani emphasized the Kurdistan Region's commitment to peaceful coexistence and regional stability, a message warmly received by King Abdullah.

Kurdistan-Netherlands talk on security and cooperation

At the Munich Security Conference, Kurdistan Region President Barzani met with King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands. They discussed a range of issues, including regional security, economic cooperation, and the importance of upholding human rights. King Willem-Alexander commended the Kurdistan Region's progress in recent years and reiterated the Netherlands' continued support for the region.

Diplomacy in Action: Strengthening bilateral ties with Azerbaijan and Kuwait

While security dominated the discussions, Kurdistan Region President Barzani actively ex-

plored avenues for strengthening bilateral ties and fostering regional partnerships. His meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev focused on exploring avenues for deepening cooperation between the two regions, including the potential establishment of an Azerbaijani consulate in Erbil, which would further solidify their political and economic ties. Similarly, his discussions with Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya served to reinforce their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and working collaboratively towards achieving regional peace and stability.

However, Barzani's efforts at the Munich Security Conference weren't without their challenges. The ongoing Iraqi parliamentary deadlock and unresolved issues between Erbil and Baghdad cast a shadow over some discussions. Nevertheless, Barzani consistently emphasized the Kurdistan Region's commitment to dialogue and finding a peaceful resolution through constitutional means.

The 60th Munich Security Conference served as a critical stage for Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani to showcase the Kurdistan Region's proactive approach to tackling regional challenges, fostering international collaboration, and securing its position as a vital partner for regional security and stability. His unwavering commitment to dialogue, peaceful resolutions, and a strong, unified Kurdistan Region resonated throughout the conference, setting the stage for continued engagement and constructive partnerships in the months and years to come. By actively participating in these high-level discussions and forging new partnerships, Kurdistan President Nechirvan Barzani positioned the Kurdistan Region as a key player in shaping the future of a region still grappling with uncertainty.

PM Barzani's diplomatic success in WGS24 in Dubai

Security concerns and strategic alliances in focus: PM Barzani addresses regional threats and calls for global action, advocating the right to self-determination for Kurds and Palestinians

In a pivotal diplomatic move, Prime Minister Masrour Barzani embarked on a significant journey to the UAE on Sunday, February 11, 2024, following a special invitation from Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of the Emirate of Dubai. The purpose of his visit was to participate in the World Government Summit, a prominent annual event held in Dubai from February 12 to 14, where he not only represented the Kurdistan Region of Iraq but also unveiled a compelling vision for global collaboration and prosperity.

Global leaders converge at the WGS24

The Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRG) Masrour Barzani's attendance was particularly noteworthy, as he leveraged this international platform to convey the vision of a 'stronger Kurdistan'.

"Delighted to visit Dubai to attend #WGS24," the PM wrote on his X account.

"This year we have strengthened our partnerships, built new bridges and conveyed the vision of a stronger Kurdistan," PM Barzani wrote.

PM Barzani's multi-faceted engagement

In subsequent speeches, he highlighted the Kurdistan Region's journey of reintegration over the past two decades and emphasized the shared challenges faced by the region. His dual role as the PM of the Kurdistan Region and as a representative of the people was evident in his nuanced address at the summit.

"I am speaking to you today as the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, which has been able to reintegrate itself from the remnants of the former Iraq over the past two decades. However, I am speaking to you as a person standing by the decision-makers of our beloved region and we have faced many common challenges together," PM Barzani stated.

In addition, Barzani remarked that: "We are all used to living in the shadow of tensions and many crises that have required wise management, at least over the past few decades". "During my discussions with decision-makers in the Middle East and abroad, I have realized a desire to overcome the common misery of our past," he said.

In another part of his speech, the Prime Minister said that with the increasing tensions in Gaza, Iraq, Syria and the Red Sea, it has become necessary to intensify efforts to develop a new plan to protect national, regional and global interests.

"Those who seek war and



threaten their neighbors for their own interests must be prosecuted. The international community must not be soft on the source of the threats" he said.

Regarding the Kurdistan Region's position in the region, Prime Minister Masrour Barzani said: "At the regional level, we are paying a very heavy price because of our positions. We have been targeted without justification. This aggression must stop."

"As I have said before here and in other capitals, Kurdistan has never been a threat to anyone. We are a factor of peace and stability. We want regional behavior based on respect and interests. We ask for support, and we need to work together to address the dangerous security threats that could destroy all the progress we have made," PM Barzani said.

"We stood by our allies during the plague of ISIS. We did our best together then. If we had not achieved that, the region would have been a completely different place and full of foreign terrorists, those who wanted to make their mark in the Middle East, to create chaos for us whenever they wanted," PM Barzani stated.

Addressing regional challenges and security threats

Prime Minister Barzani addressed the escalating tensions in various regions, emphasizing the need for intensified efforts to develop a new plan to protect national, regional, and global interests. He called for accountability for those seeking war and threatening their neighbors, underscoring that the international community must not turn a blind eye to such threats, even if they align with certain interests.

PM Barzani draws parallels between Kurdish and Palestinian causes

PM Barzani utilized his plat-

form to address not only regional challenges but also international issues. His message on the Palestinian issue resonated with a broader narrative, drawing parallels between the neglect of Palestinian rights and the struggles of the Kurdish people. He called for international recognition of the Kurds' legitimate demand for self-determination, stressing that respecting these rights would fortify global stability and progress.

"The root causes of the Palestinian issue have not been implemented for 80 years. If they had been implemented, we would not have seen the current tragedy," PM Barzani stated. He drew a parallel between the neglect of Palestinian rights and the Kurdish story, emphasizing that injustice served as a breeding ground for inequality, poverty, corruption, and political instability.

Acclaim from political analysts

Kurdish political analyst Mohammed Ihsan applauded Prime Minister Barzani's bold reference to the right to self-determination in his speech at the WGS24. He stated, "Prime Minister Masrour Barzani boldly referred to the right to self-determination in his speech at the World Government Summit." Ihsan commended the KRG's commitment to addressing global issues and championing the rights of the Kurdish people.

Global acknowledgment of PM Barzani's vision

On the sidelines of the summit, Nadim Zahawi, a member of the British Parliament and former Finance Minister, commended Prime Minister Barzani's speech. He highlighted the importance of the Prime Minister's insights in addressing regional prosperity, effective management, and climate change. Zahawi underscored the interconnectedness of stability, justice

in Iraqi politics, and the Kurds' role as equal partners in the federal system.

"If these issues and economic prosperity are not resolved, climate problems and challenges will destroy us all," the former British Finance Minister said.

In response to the participation of the KRG delegation in the summit, Ahmad Al-Zahir, the UAE Consul General in Erbil, emphasized the significance of Prime Minister Barzani's presence. Al-Zahir noted that the Prime Minister's meetings with UAE leaders highlighted the importance of UAE relations with Iraq and showcased the Kurdish nation. He further emphasized the potential for strengthened ties and increased UAE investment in the Kurdistan Region, acknowledging the distinctiveness of the Prime Minister's speech at the summit.

Diplomatic triumph for the Kurdistan Region

PM Barzani met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Dubai during the WGS24. It caused widespread reaction in the Turkish media. The official Anadolu news agency reported the news as the first source in Turkey and later published a video of the meeting. Meanwhile, Milliyet newspaper reported on its website that Erdogan held a number of important meetings in Dubai, including one with KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani.

The KRG's PM Masrour Barzani's participation in the WGS24 in Dubai proved to be a diplomatic and strategic triumph for the Kurdistan Region. The summit not only provided a platform for global dialogue on critical issues but also showcased the region's potential for investment and collaboration. Prime Minister Barzani's speeches resonated with the international community, reinforcing the Kurdistan Region's commitment

to peace, stability, and progress on the global stage. The summit served as a catalyst for stronger ties between the Kurdistan Region and the UAE, fostering opportunities for increased investment and diplomatic relations.

Economic opportunities unveiled on the sidelines

The KRG seized the opportunity presented by the WGS24 to announce more than 200 investment opportunities for foreign investors in various sectors. Dr. Mohammed Shukri, Chairman of the Investment Board of the KRG, highlighted the diverse investment prospects in fields such as industry, agriculture, and mining, emphasizing the untapped potential of the Kurdistan Region.

"There is a lot of potential for investment opportunities in the Kurdistan Region," Dr. Shukri stated. According to the statistics of the Investment Board, 2023 alone witnessed 154 projects in the Kurdistan Region securing investment licenses, with a cumulative capital of four billion and 300 million dollars.

The World Government Summit, an annual gathering known for its impact on shaping global policies, spanned three days, from February 12 to 14. Over 125 leaders, heads of government, and representatives of international institutions participated, making it a unique platform for dialogue and cooperation. With representation from more than 25 heads of state and government, 85 international organizations, and 120 government delegations, the summit underscored its global significance.

This year's summit, hosting 110 key dialogue sessions and 23 ministerial meetings, featured the participation of 200 international speakers and more than 300 ministers from different governments.

The significance of federalism in addressing Iraq's challenges remains intact



By *Jawad Qadir*

Following the Kurdish Uprising in the spring of 1991, the Kurdistan Front, a coalition of the Kurdish political parties, sought to develop a fresh perspective on the Kurdish national aspirations within Iraq. The Kurdish leadership conducted a comprehensive assessment of the existing transformations at the time, considering the new geopolitical developments both at the international and regional levels. These transformations encompassed the conclusion of the Cold War and the aftermath of the second Gulf War, which had brought about a new political landscape for the Kurds in the region.

In May 1992, the Kurds took a momentous stride towards autonomy by organizing the inaugural free elections, which received international observation, and establishing a political and civil administration in their territories. Concurrently, the Parliament of Kurdistan embraced the concept of a "federal Iraq" as a means to pursue a peaceful resolution to the long-standing ethnic conflict in the country. This unresolved issue was deliberated upon at the London and Salahaddin Conferences right before the fall of former Iraqi regime, where the Kurdish leadership consistently underscored the significance of federalism as a political framework suitable for a multi-ethnic nation like Iraq.

After the demise of Saddam Hussein's rule in 2003, the Kurds collaborated with all Iraqi factions to establish a democratic and federal system that would uphold human rights and recognize the aspirations of the Kurdish people. Two decades ago, the Kurds expressed their desire to remain a part of a federal and democratic Iraq by voting for the country's 2005 constitution. During this period, significant developments unfolded at the national, regional, and international levels, presenting a promising opportunity

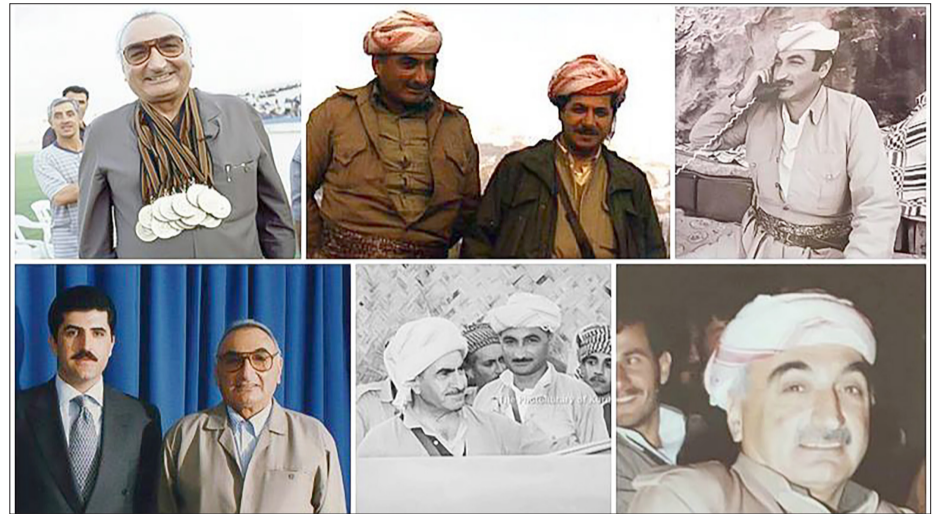
for them. At the national level however, Iraq witnessed a lack of central authority, marking the first instance of a complete breakdown in government presence since the establishment of modern Iraq over 100 years ago. However, it is crucial to take into account the historical context when examining the factors behind the establishment of a federal Iraq.

Nonetheless, the Kurds maintained a strong sense of optimism and trust in Iraq's fresh political framework and the internal opposition. They anticipated that the new political leadership in Iraq would adopt a different approach from its predecessor and acknowledge the struggle for freedom and national rights.

Regrettably, the past 20 years have demonstrated that Iraq's new political elite have failed to learn from the nation's history. While dividing Iraq into three self-governing regions may not be the ideal solution, it remains the sole viable solution that satisfies the enduring desires for national and political rights of not just the Kurds, but also the Shiites and Sunnis, who have experienced marginalization during various eras in Iraq's past. Unfortunately, the policies implemented by Iraq's governments deliberately postponed or obstructed the process outlined in Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution which could strengthen the federal structures in the country.

Federalism remains relevant in Iraq due to its ability to accommodate diversity, promote decentralization, mitigate conflicts, address economic disparities, and safeguard against authoritarianism. Given Iraq's complex demographic makeup, federalism provides a mechanism to address the concerns and aspirations of various communities, fostering a sense of inclusivity and shared governance.

Franso Hariri's legacy: Symbol of diversity and unity in Kurdistan, 23 years after assassination



More than two decades after the tragic assassination of Franso Hariri by the terrorist group Ansar Al-Islam while he was going to his work office, the Kurdistan Region reflects on the enduring legacy of a man who symbolized diversity and unity in the face of adversity. Franso Hariri, a prominent Assyrian-Christian figure and former governor of Erbil, continued to be celebrated for his unwavering commitment to coexistence among various ethnic and religious communities.

In 2001, Hariri fell victim to a radical religious group, leaving a void in Kurdish politics. On the 23rd anniversary of his assassination, the people of Kurdistan will pay homage to a leader whose life was dedicated to fostering peace and understanding.

Symbol of diversity



Born in Harir, northeast of Erbil, Hariri hailed from a Christian Assyrian family. Despite his Christian background, he embraced and championed the rich diversity of the Kurdistan Region, home to various ethnic and religious groups, including Assyrians, Chaldeans, Yezidis, Sabeans, Zoroastrians, and Shabaks.

Legacy in sports and arts

Hariri's impact extended beyond poli-

tics. Under his leadership, Erbil saw the establishment of the Franso Hariri International Stadium, a testament to his commitment to sports infrastructure. His passion for the arts flourishes in the Kurdish Orchestra and the Palace of Art, both initiated by him.



Educational and social contributions

During his tenure as governor from 1996 to 2000, Hariri actively supported projects for the modernization of Erbil, even amidst economic challenges. His dedication to education, health, and sports projects left a lasting imprint on the city.

A multifaceted leader

Hariri's influence reached beyond political borders. He served in various capacities, from a close associate of the KDP leader Mustafa Barzani during the Kurdish Revolution to a minister in the Kurdistan Regional Government. Despite his Christian background, Hariri's friendships extended across religious lines, and his contributions to mosques and religious places were noteworthy.

As Kurdistan commemorates Franso Hariri every February 18th, his legacy stands as a reminder of the enduring power of diversity, unity, and the pursuit of a peaceful coexistence.



Kurds Claim Ninawa's Deputy Governor Post



Sirwan Rozhbayani from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) was re-elected on Saturday as Nineveh's first deputy governor after lengthy negotiations.

Following securing a total of 6 seats in Ninawa's Provincial Council, Kurds claim the post of Ninawa's deputy governor. Ninawa's Provincial Council held its first meeting on the 4th of February after the result of the elections, which was ratified on 18 December 2023, to elect the governor and the head of the provincial council in Ninawa. The election of the deputy governor was delayed to 10th of February, due to disputes between Shia and Sunni blocs. During the second session, Sirwan Rojbiyani from Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) bloc was elected by the council's majority of votes.

In an interview following his election as a deputy governor of Ninawa, Rojbiyani promised to work on maintaining the coexistence of different components of the governorate, and fully implementation of Sinjar

agreement to facilitate the return of the displaced people. He added that, as the administration, they will not allow any party to undermine the stability of Ninawa. The elected deputy governor also criticized the federal government's budget allocation for the governorate. He argued that the Iraqi government has not adequately considered the extensive level of destruction Ninawa endured in the past due to the war on ISIS. He urged the federal government to increase the budget for the reconstruction of the governorate, pledging to exert their maximum efforts to extend the services to the people of Ninawa.

Following the provincial council election in Ninawa, the Sunni blocs formed an alliance of 13 seats, forming up the largest bloc of the council. The bloc nominated Abdulqadir Dakhil, who won the majority of the votes

in the Council, including Kurdish votes and became Ninawa's governor. The governor stated in his first appearance on the Kurdish media that they need Kurdistan Region's experience in the reconstruction efforts of Ninawa. He emphasized the importance of the implementation of Sinjar agreement, adding that the stability of Ninawa is tied to the stability in Sinjar district. He also stated that the security dossier in Ninawa is under a big challenge while Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) are deployed in most of the governorate, explaining that the security dossier of all of Ninawa will be handed over to the federal police.

Ninawa Provincial Council consists of 29 seats. In the election that was held on 18 December 2023, the KDP bloc secured 4, while Kurdistan Patriotic Union secured 2 seats in the council.

Iraqi Government Plans to Close IDP Camps in Kurdistan

The government of Iraq has set a deadline to close all the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in Iraq, particularly those in the Kurdistan Region, by the end of July, aiming to put an end to the displacement crisis, which has been ongoing since 2014. The move came amid speculations that the Iraqi government might be leveraging the dossier as a political tool against the Kurdistan Region, given KRG's long-standing opposition to the forcible return of the displaced people. Meanwhile, the federal Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MDM) is facing heavy criticism for its failure to deliver services to the IDPs residing in the camps in the Kurdistan Region.

The Iraqi government has given three choices to the IDPs to leave the camps: first, to return to their areas of origin; secondly, to permanently reside in the governorates they are displaced to and are currently staying; and thirdly, move to a third Iraqi governorate of their choice. The announcement came amidst criticism asserting that the Iraqi government lacks a comprehensive plan for the return of the IDPs. The MDM has pledged various forms of assistance for the IDPs opting to return to their original areas, including cash, necessary home appliances, enrolling them in the social support network and public appointment. "The displacement dossier must be closed. Those who choose

to return, will be given 4 million Iraqi dinars cash, and 2% of Ninawa's public jobs will be allocated to the returnees" stated Ali Abbas, the spokesperson of the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement Migration and, speaking to Kurdish media outlets. However, despite these efforts, the Yezidi member of the Iraqi parliament, Mahma Khalil criticized the MDM's attempts for failing in its duties to provide services to the IDPs and "lacking any plan [for them] to return to their areas of origin".

Kurdistan Region Government repeatedly accounted its stance in clearly supporting the voluntary and dignified return of the displaced people, while strongly opposing the forcible return of the people who sought shelter in the Kurdistan Region and are currently living in camps. Despite the Iraqi government's decision, a part of the displaced community is still concerned, and unwilling to return, mainly due to the destruction of their homes as a result of the military operations, and the security situation in their areas, in particular in Ninawa Governorate's Sinjar district. Haji Qasim, one of the IDPs who is currently residing in an IDP camp around Erbil, told a Kurdish media outlet that he and his family are not willing to return to western Mosul due to lack of services and dwelling. He added that the assistance given by the Iraqi government does not



The Bardarash camp in the Kurdistan Region's Duhok Province

suffice to re-establishing a dignified life in their area of origin, including re-building a house of their own after it was destroyed due to the military campaigns in Mosul between 2016 and 2017.

Moreover, locals in Sinjar districts who have returned to the area complain of a lack of services and compensation by the Iraqi government. According to the officials in the district, only 20% of the population who returned to Sinjar have received compensation from the Iraqi government. Yezidi activists, on the other side, are concerned about the level of support the returnees in Sinjar are receiving from the Iraqi government. Murad Ismael, a Yezidi activist, stated on his account on 'X' that the support the returnees re-

ceived are "insufficient and not fast enough". He voiced concerns that this will lead Yezidis to consider leaving Iraq instead of returning to their area.

Following the announcement of the plan to close the IDPs camps, the Iraqi government has extended its measures to end the activities of Iraq's Ministry of Education's representatives in Kurdistan Region's governorates as well. The representatives used to sponsor and oversee schools and education activities in the IDPs camps. This decision consequently means the students in the IDPs camp will no longer have access to schools after July this year. Similarly, the federal government's support to the displaced community has dropped drastically, as an attempt to pressure camp

residents to leave the camps or return to their areas of origin, according to Majid Shingali, a Kurdish member of the Iraqi parliament. The MP revealed that the MDM and has distributed food assistance to the IDPs from Sinjar three times only throughout 2023, while the families should have received the assistance on monthly basis. "Kurdistan Region Government has rejected the process [of the forcible return of the IDPs], thus, the MDM blames KRG for lack of coordination with the Ministry [due to the KRG's stance]" Shingali added. The Kurdish MP criticized the role of the federal Ministry's performance due to their attempts to use the displacement dossier as a political tool against the Kurdistan Region.

The federal government's MDM estimates the number of Internally displaced persons currently living in the camps across the Kurdistan Region by 120,000 people (180,000 according to the UN agencies), mostly from Sinjar, divided among 23 camps. The displacement emerged in 2014 when ISIS attacked the Iraqi provinces neighboring the Kurdistan Region, including the Iraq's second largest city of Mosul. Moreover, a larger scale displacement occurred towards the Kurdistan Region when the Iraqi army launched the military operation to recapture Mosul from ISIS in 2016, during which time over 1 million individuals were displaced to the Kurdistan Region.

By Shvan Goran

KRG preserves linguistic diversity

Language freedom in Kurdistan: Turkmen, Syriac, and Armenian enjoy studying unrestricted mother tongue education

The significance of preserving one's mother tongue and, in the case of Kurds, the importance of learning the Kurdish language is deeply rooted in cultural identity and heritage. In countries like Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria, where substantial Kurdish populations reside, the language serves as a crucial link to their history, traditions, and sense of belonging.

The Kurdish language, the 59th-most used in the world, is primarily spoken in the all parts of Kurdistan, which include areas of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran and scholars classify it as Indo-European.

However, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq stands out as a beacon of progress, having made significant strides in developing and promoting the Kurdish language. Despite these challenges, the resilience of the Kurdish people in preserving their linguistic identity remains a testament to the enduring power of cultural heritage.

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, efforts have been made to recognize and support various languages, including Turkmen, Syriac, and Armenian. Schools where instruction in these languages have been established ensuring the preservation of linguistic diversity.

Last year, Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani

called for the increased use of the Kurdish language on digital platforms and media, especially on International Mother Language Day. This aligns with UNESCO's recognition of February 21st as 'Mother Language Day,' emphasizing the crucial role of language in fostering sustainable development.

According to UNESCO, 40 percent of the global population do not have access to study in their mother tongues.

In the Kurdistan Region, along with Kurdish, Turkmen, Syriac and Armenian languages are given importance, so 19 schools have been opened for the Turkmen language alone and students study in their mother tongue.

Sabah Salih, Director General of Turkmen Education in the Ministry of Education-KRG, said, "The same Kurdish education system will be translated into Turkish and Syriac will be taught the same subjects, along with Turkish subjects taught in our schools."

Kurmanji is the largest dialect group, spoken by an estimated 15 to 20 million Kurds in Turkey, Syria, northern Iraq, and northwest and northeast Iran.

Sorani is spoken by an estimated 6 to 7 million Kurds in much of Iraqi Kurdistan and the Iranian Kurdistan Province.

In a recent survey conducted by

the Sociopolitical Center across 15 provinces in Kurdish-inhabited cities in Turkey, a staggering 86.7% of respondents expressed a strong desire for their children to receive education in the Kurdish language. The survey, encompassing the diverse provinces of Amed, Merdin, Ruha, Van, and others, highlighted a resounding demand for integrating Kurdish into the educational system.

The significance of this demand extends beyond the classroom, reaching into the healthcare sector. A recent development in the Turkish health system saw the inclusion of five languages for electronic prescriptions, omitting Kurdish. This sparked a debate among social media users, questioning whether the addition of Kurdish would lead to division within the country.

According to the 1979 Iranian constitution, minorities in the country have the legal claim to be taught in their own language in schools. However, over 40 years since the drafting of the constitution, this right is yet to be implemented fully in many areas and Kurds of the country, as well as other minorities, still struggle with the inaccessibility to an education in their own language.

In Iran, despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing minorities the right to be taught in

Education in the Kurdistan Region A Snapshot

- Total number of schools: **6,816**
- Total number of students: **1,755,775**
- Total number of teachers: **120,009**
- Total number of employees: **36,310**
- Number of Syriac schools: **25**
- Number of Turkmen schools: **18**
- Number of Arabic schools: **116**
- Number of Kurdish schools: **6,629**
- Number of students studying Syriac: **3,218**
- Number of students studying Turkmen: **2,399**
- Number of students studying Arabic: **35,061**

their own language, the reality for Kurds and other minorities remains a struggle for accessible education in their mother tongue. Frustrated parents have resorted to hiring private teachers to ensure their children learn Kurdish, underscoring the value placed on language as a cornerstone of identity.

Mohammad Khani, a Kurdish sociologist in the Kurdish region of Iran, emphasized that no school should relegate a mother tongue to a second language, urging mothers to prioritize their children's first language as a vital element in shaping personality and national identity.

With over 7,000 languages spoken worldwide, the United Nations warns that 6,000 are at risk of extinction by the end of the century, emphasizing the profound impact language has on culture and heritage.

As debates around language preservation continue, it is crucial to recognize the Kurdish language not just as a means of communication but as a vital component of Kurdish identity and heritage. Efforts to promote and integrate Kurdish into education and daily life are not only essential for the Kurds but also contribute to the broader tapestry of global linguistic diversity.

KRG to establish climate change office



The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has recently approved the formation of an office within the environmental board to address issues relating to climate change in the Region.

In a letter addressed to the Board of Environmental Protection and Improvement, the Kurdistan Region's Council of Ministers approved a petition from the board to establish a climate change office. The office will consist of two departments: Mitigation and Loss and Damage.

The office will be a separate entity from the meteorology and seismology directorate, affiliated to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, according to Abdulrazaq Khailani, the spokesperson for the environmental board.

"The climate change office is not linked

to the Kurdistan Region's meteorology and seismology directorate. This office has functioned in the past as well, but it had not been independent," Khailani stated.

According to the UN, Iraq is the fifth most vulnerable to climate change, including water and food insecurity. It is facing a severe water shortage because of reduced precipitation, higher temperatures, and waste mismanagement.

Scorching temperatures exceeding 50 degrees Celsius were recorded in Iraq in 2023, coupled with water scarcity, desertification, and reduced rainfall.

According to the UN, over 130,000 people in southern Iraq were prone to displacement by the end of 2023 due to the effects of climate change.

KRG Police Report: 40% Crime Rate Drop Linked to Unlicensed Gun Registration

Lieutenant Colonel Karzan Amir, the Media and Communication Chief of the Kurdistan Region Police, has stated that the incidences of criminal activity have witnessed a notable decrease of roughly 40 percent due to the registration of unlicensed firearms.

According to him, Prime Minister Masrour Barzani of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) initiated a gun registration process in Kurdistan. He stated that the KRG had established 90 offices where individuals with unlicensed weapons could register their firearms.

He further emphasized that incidents of homicide, suicide, and gun violence have also declined by 30 to 40 percent. He stressed that while no government can entirely eradicate crime, efforts can be made to mitigate crime rates.

Amir added that the KRG has granted gun owners a one-year period to register their unlicensed firearms. Furthermore, he highlighted that this deadline has been extended by an additional two months. He urged all individuals to visit the designated offices and complete the official registration process for their firearms.

Lieutenant Colonel Amir also cautioned that individuals discovered in possession of unauthorized firearms at police checkpoints would face a financial penalty and have their firearms confiscated.

Additionally, Amir announced the immediate closure of all establishments engaged in the unauthorized sale of firearms following PM Barzani's decision. He underscored that no remaining locations exist where firearms may be sold. Furthermore, he mentioned that certain internet platforms had been utilized for the illegal sale of firearms, but they were promptly identified and shut down.

Amir stated that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Ministry of Interior have jointly decided to establish a facility in each city and autonomous administration within the Kurdistan Region (KR). These facilities will be tasked with repairing firearms, as well as facilitating the buying, selling, and issuance of permits for them. The KRG will oversee the operations of these facilities, which will also be equipped with a police station, civil defense office, and hospital.

Building Democratic State in Iraq



Weaknesses of the Iraqi state is its persistent political fragmentation along ethnic and sectarian lines

By **Saadula Agrawi**

Iraq's transition to democracy has been marred by decades of authoritarian rule, sectarian conflict, and external interference

I believe that the Iraq's relations with its neighbors and the broader international community play a crucial role in shaping its democratic trajectory. Regional rivalries, geopolitical tensions, and external interference have often complicated Iraq's internal politics and security situation. Constructive engagement with neighboring countries, as well as with international partners and organizations, is essential for fostering stability, economic development, and democratic governance in Iraq.

Yes, since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, Iraq has embarked on a challenging journey towards building a democratic state. Despite significant progress in holding elections, drafting constitutions, and establishing democratic institutions, Iraq continues to grapple with deep-rooted political, social, and security challenges. I believe in the complexities of building democracy in Iraq, highlighting the key obstacles, recent developments, and potential pathways forward. Iraq's transition to democracy has been marred by decades of authoritarian rule, sectarian conflict, and external interference. The legacy of Saddam Hussein's regime, characterized by repression, violence, and ethnic divisions, has left deep scars on Iraqi society. Additionally, the US-led invasion in 2003 and subsequent occupation further destabilized the country, exacerbating sectarian tensions and fueling insurgency. Despite these challenges, Iraq has made significant strides in establishing democratic institutions and processes. The country has held multiple national and provincial elections, forming representative governments at both the federal and local levels. The Iraqi parliament, judiciary, and executive branches play crucial roles in shaping the country's governance structure and upholding the rule of law. I believe that one of the biggest hurdles to building democracy in Iraq is the persistent ethnic and sectarian divisions that continue to shape political dynamics. The country's diverse population, comprising Arabs, Kurds, Turkmens, and other ethnic groups, as well as Sunni and Shiite Muslims, presents unique challenges to fostering national unity and inclusivity. Sectarianism has often been exploited by political elites to advance their interests, further polarizing society. Of course, the Iraq's security



environment remains fragile, with ongoing threats from terrorism, insurgency, and external actors. The rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in 2014 posed a significant challenge to Iraq's stability, leading to a protracted conflict that displaced millions and caused widespread destruction. While Iraqi security forces, supported by international partners, have made gains in combating terrorism, security remains a paramount concern for the country's stability. On the other hand, the economic development and the provision of basic services are essential for consolidating democracy and addressing the grievances of the Iraqi population. Despite being rich in natural resources, Iraq faces challenges such as corruption, unemployment, and inadequate infrastructure. Improving economic prospects and ensuring equitable access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities are critical for promoting social cohesion and building public trust in democratic institutions.

We know that the process of building a democratic state in Iraq is a complex and multifaceted endeavor that requires sustained efforts, political will, and societal engagement. While significant progress has been made since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, challenges such as ethnic divisions, security threats, and governance deficiencies persist. Moving forward, Iraq must prioritize national reconciliation, institutional reform, and inclusive governance to consolidate its democratic gains and address the aspirations of its diverse population. By fostering

a culture of dialogue, tolerance, and respect for pluralism, Iraq can overcome its challenges and chart a path towards a more stable, prosperous, and democratic future. The Iraqi state has grappled with a myriad of challenges since its inception, ranging from political instability and sectarian divisions to economic woes and security threats. Despite efforts to rebuild and strengthen governance structures following decades of dictatorship and conflict, Iraq continues to struggle with deep-rooted weaknesses that undermine its stability and hinder its progress.

I believe that we can delve into the critical weaknesses of the Iraqi state, examining their underlying causes and potential implications for the country's future. One of the most pronounced weaknesses of the Iraqi state is its persistent political fragmentation along ethnic and sectarian lines. Divisions between Sunni Arabs, Shiite Arabs, and Kurds have fueled sectarian tensions and hindered efforts to foster national unity. Political parties often prioritize sectarian interests over the common good, perpetuating a cycle of polarization and mistrust that undermines effective governance and consensus-building. I believe the weak governance and rampant corruption pose significant challenges to the Iraqi state, eroding public trust in institutions and exacerbating social inequalities. Corruption permeates all government and public administration levels, distorting resource allocation, stifling economic development, and undermining the rule of law. The lack of transparency and account-

ability hampers efforts to deliver essential services, address public grievances, and combat nepotism and cronyism.

Iraq faces persistent security threats from terrorism, insurgency, and militia violence, which undermine the state's ability to maintain law and order. Despite significant gains in combating ISIS, pockets of instability remain fueled by sectarian tensions, external interference, and the proliferation of armed groups. The Iraqi security forces continue to grapple with capacity gaps, corruption, and internal divisions, hampering their effectiveness in ensuring national security. We know that Iraq's economy is highly dependent on oil exports, leaving it vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices and market dynamics. The country's overreliance on oil revenues has hindered economic diversification and sustainable development, exacerbating poverty, unemployment, and social disparities. Moreover, mismanagement of public finances, lack of investment in infrastructure, and bureaucratic hurdles have stifled private sector growth and hindered efforts to stimulate economic recovery. The Iraq's ethnic and regional dynamics further exacerbate its vulnerabilities, with tensions simmering between the central government in Baghdad and semi-autonomous regions such as Iraqi Kurdistan. Disputes over territory, resources, and political representation continue to strain relations between Baghdad and Erbil, impeding efforts to forge a cohesive national identity and foster cooperation on key is-

governance. It's to ensure that the Iraqi state's weaknesses pose significant challenges to its stability, prosperity, and democratic aspirations. Addressing these weaknesses requires a comprehensive approach that tackles the root causes of political fragmentation, governance deficiencies, security threats, economic vulnerabilities, and ethnic tensions. Reforms aimed at strengthening institutions, promoting transparency and accountability, fostering inclusive governance, and diversifying the economy are essential for building a resilient and cohesive Iraqi state. Moreover, regional and international cooperation, coupled with genuine efforts towards national reconciliation and social cohesion, are crucial for overcoming the myriad challenges facing Iraq and charting a path towards a more stable, prosperous, and inclusive future.

I believe that the deficit in the political and economic fields made the Iraqi state vulnerable to penetration from the outside, just as it exposed Iraqi society and the Iraqi citizens to very severe tests because of this, especially with weak immunity and the feeling of discrimination and marginalization by large segments of the population. The matter has to do with the absence of the necessary political participation and the dominance of elites who are ignorant of the state's working mechanisms and agencies, as well as about its involvement in financial and administrative corruption.

Kurdistan Matters



By Dr. Tyler Fisher & Jhodssie Roca Enriquez

Valentine's Day and the Paradox of New Traditions

In some towns of Kurdistan, Valentine's Day, February 14, passes unnoticed. This year was no exception. In Soran, north-east of Erbil, for example, there were no visible signs of Valentine's celebrations this month, not even among the university students who constitute a large and lively portion of the city's population. Some, to be sure, avoid the holiday for religious reasons, considering it un-Islamic; others simply choose to forgo a custom that seems alien and inauthentic. Elsewhere, however, the people of Kurdistan adopt and adapt elements of Valentine's Day, a relatively recent foreign import to the region, alongside old Kurdish customs for expressing affection, to mark this mid-February Feast of Love. "Valentine's Day is a new tradition in Kurdistan, a new addition to Kurdish culture," says Chyayi Abbas, a 48-year-old university lecturer in Erbil. Is the holiday out of place here? As a "new tradition," it embodies the paradoxes and tensions that globalization has brought to the country, where conspicuously "Western" ingredients of the holiday mingle alongside ancient Kurdish folkways as well as shared features that seem to transcend cultures.

Historically, the Feast Day of Saint Valentine commemorated at least two Christian martyrs, both named Valentinus, who were put to death for their faith in the last decades of the pagan Roman Empire. When the medieval European church set the memorial day for their martyrdom as February 14, it was inevitable that the date would become associated with the first signs of spring each year, the first mating of birds, and romantic love. Geoffrey Chaucer, writing in the late fourteenth century, gives us the earliest recorded reference to Valentine's Day in English, describing it as "Seynt Volantynys day / Whan euery bryd comyth there to chese his ma[t]e," based on the belief that birds begin mating

on that date. In our own time, Valentine's Day, which now carries scarcely any religious connotations, is perhaps most redolent of European and North American popular culture (red and white decorations, greeting cards, gifts of flowers or chocolates, and romantic rendezvous), but it has proved remarkably adaptable in far different contexts worldwide.

Certain holidays are inextricably linked to particular emblems, objects and rites that vividly represent the significance of the celebration or memorial: Kurdistan's Flag Day (December 17) is unmistakably patriotic in its visual displays; Newroz would be unrecognizable without bonfires and picnics. But the objects associated with Valentine's Day offer scope for greater variation and adaptation, and even afford cross-cultural continuities.

The colors red and white are ubiquitous in Valentine's Day decorations: red, the color of desire and other heightened emotions; white, the color of purity. This dovetails with Kurdish connotations regarding these colors. Among others, the combination of *sûr u spî*, red and white, signal ruddy health and beauty, as in rosy cheeks and a fair complexion. In the past, red was a traditional color for Kurdish wedding gowns and still carries celebratory significance for auspicious occasions. In Kurdistan, the commercial demand for red roses has rapidly increased, year upon year, because of the custom for lovers to give one another roses, as well as other red flowers, on Valentine's Day. A local counterpart is the *sêva mêxekrêj*, a red apple studded with cloves. Chyayi Abbas recalls, "Kurds used to express romantic affection through the gesture of giving a clove-apple, a practice dating back centuries in Kurdish culture." This fragrant, colorful, long-lasting love token, which some areas of Kurdistan associate more closely with the Winter Solstice, translates natu-



rally to February 14.

Tavga Hassan, a 22-year-old university student in Erbil, describes Valentine's Day as a "time for renewing love, reinforcing commitment, and celebrating relationships." She notes that the Kurdish version of the celebration is characterized by the use of Kurdish love-words and, for many, by dressing in traditional Kurdish attire.

Mohammed Ahmed, a recent graduate of Charmo University in Chamchamal, is now engaged to be married. He and his bride-to-be are considering making the anniversary of their engagement their personal "Valentine's Day," even though the date does not coincide with February. "We prefer choosing a day that is uniquely special for both of us." For them, prioritizing their personal alternative to Valentine's Day also makes sense because they do not view the foreign holiday as an authentic part of Kurdish

traditions. "If it was a Kurdish tradition," Mohammed says, "we would have heard about it from our parents, like Newroz for example." Although he acknowledges that the celebration can bring couples together, strengthening their relationship, he sees little value in "celebrating only one day for our loved ones, emphasizing only one day." (Still, we can proudly fly the Kurdish flag every day, but it is also important to set aside one special day to commemorate its meaning. So, too, for love.)

In the United States and in Great Britain, there is a notable rise in efforts to counter the holiday's over-commercialization -- to give handmade greeting cards, or to plan inexpensive yet meaningful family gatherings. Alongside reactions against the annual commercial excess, there are movements to make the holiday more inclusive of relationships beyond roman-

tic coupling. Some champion "Palentine's Day" and "Galentine's Day" as alternatives to the conventional holiday. Palentine's (punning on the word "pal") emphasizes that the day can celebrate friendship as well as romantic love, while Galentine's (punning on "gal," an informal or dialectal version of the word "girl") extols affection among female friends.

Traditions can appear changeless, but this appearance belies the reality that traditions are, in fact, forever evolving, taking on new features while discarding others over time. Valentine's Day in Kurdistan is still too new to be called a tradition, and certainly too recent to be deemed a "Kurdish" tradition. If Valentine's Day does prove to have endurance as a celebration in Kurdistan, it will duly take on local characteristics as it takes root. Fears of global homogeneity or cultural erasure are likely to be premature.

Investment Opportunities in the Iraqi Oil Sector Abundant Reserves and Production Potential

By *Dr. Mathew Jose*

Government Initiatives and Investment Framework

Endowed with some of the world's largest oil reserves, Iraq presents lucrative opportunities for investment in its oil sector. Despite decades of conflict, political instability, and economic challenges, Iraq remains a key player in the global energy market, attracting interest from international investors eager to capitalize on its vast hydrocarbon resources. In this article, we explore the investment landscape in the Iraqi oil sector, highlighting key opportunities, challenges, and strategies for potential investors. Iraq boasts significant oil reserves estimated at over 140 billion barrels, making it one of the top oil-producing countries in the world. The country's oil fields, located primarily in the southern Basra region and the Kurdistan region in the north, hold immense potential for exploration, development, and production. With ongoing advancements in technology

and infrastructure, Iraq has the capacity to significantly increase its oil output and exports, driving economic growth and revenue generation. The Iraqi government has taken steps to attract foreign investment in its oil sector through various initiatives and investment frameworks. The Ministry of Oil has launched licensing rounds and production-sharing agreements (PSAs) to encourage international oil companies (IOCs) to participate in exploration and development projects. Additionally, the Iraqi government has implemented reforms to improve the investment climate, enhance regulatory transparency, and streamline bureaucratic procedures for investors. Investment in Iraq's oil sector extends beyond exploration and production to include infrastructure development and upgrading. The country requires significant investments in pipelines, refineries, storage facilities, and transportation networks to optimize production, reduce operational costs, and

expand export capacity. Upgrading aging infrastructure and implementing modern technologies are essential for maximizing the efficiency and profitability of Iraq's oil operations. Security and political stability are critical considerations for investors in Iraq's oil sector, given the country's history of conflict and instability. While security challenges persist in certain regions, particularly areas affected by insurgency and militia activity, the Iraqi government has made progress in improving security conditions through military operations, law enforcement measures, and international cooperation. Political stability and a conducive regulatory environment are essential for fostering investor confidence and mitigating risks. Investment in Iraq's oil sector must prioritize sustainable development and social impact considerations to ensure long-term benefits for the country and its people. Environmental protection, community engagement, and corporate social responsibility (CSR)

initiatives are integral to responsible oil development practices. Investing in local workforce training, education, and healthcare can contribute to human capital development and socio-economic empowerment in oil-producing regions. The investment in the Iraqi oil sector presents significant opportunities for international investors seeking to capitalize on the country's abundant hydrocarbon resources and production potential. Despite challenges related to security, political stability, and infrastructure, Iraq's commitment to attracting foreign investment, implementing reforms, and leveraging technological advancements creates a favorable investment climate. By partnering with the Iraqi government and local stakeholders, investors can contribute to the sustainable development of Iraq's oil sector while realizing attractive returns on investment. However, careful risk assessment, due diligence, and adherence to ethical and legal standards are essential for navigating the

complexities of investing in Iraq's dynamic energy market.

Iraq seeks to enhance oil and gas production and encourage investment in the oil sector through the entry of international companies through competition for investment opportunities, which includes 13 fields and exploration sites distributed across the northern, central and southern governorates, as specialists in Iraqi economic affairs described the step of the new licensing round as "positive." While others called for the restoration of governance of the oil and gas sector in Mesopotamia. Benefiting from the expertise of international companies specialized in developing oil and gas fields and sites, in order to achieve for Iraq enhanced returns from the enormous oil and gas wealth, pointing out that licensing rounds to develop exploratory patches and increase oil production must be accompanied by diversifying export outlets from the export ports in Basra or through neighboring countries. This develop-

ment should be on a parallel path with the launch of licensing rounds so that we do not delay again, as happened when the oil fields were introduced and gas was neglected, which created a gap and a great need for it and Iraq lost billions of dollars. The importance of the government approach to developing the oil and gas sector, improving and increasing production, and working to invest in gas to achieve self-sufficiency in cooperation with international companies. Oil investment has great importance in serving the state and its reconstruction on the one hand and enriching the investor on the other. The oil state needs huge resources of money and modern technical expertise to complete its projects, increase its growth, and increase its well-being. Therefore, the process of investment in the oil sector is considered one of the important processes. In changing the roots of the economy from a rentier economy to making oil a bridge for the development of all sectors.



Navigating Diplomacy, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Successful Foreign Policy Approach

By *James Harris*

Regional Engagement and Bilateral Relations, the Humanitarian Assistance and Refugee Support, Energy Diplomacy and Economic Partnerships, the Conflict Mediation and Regional Stability, and the Diplomatic Outreach and International Recognition

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), situated in northern Iraq, has demonstrated adeptness in navigating regional dynamics to carve out a successful foreign policy strategy. Despite challenges posed by geopolitical complexities and internal dynamics, the KRG has effectively engaged with neighboring countries and international actors to promote its interests and solidify its position on the global stage. We can explore the key components and successes of the Kurdistan Regional Government's foreign policy. The KRG has prioritized building strong bilateral relations with neighboring countries, including Turkey, Iran, and Syria, as well as with regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These dip-

lomatic efforts have focused on fostering economic cooperation, enhancing security collaboration, and addressing cross-border issues. By maintaining cordial relations with neighboring states, the KRG has secured vital trade routes, investment opportunities, and support for its regional aspirations. Energy diplomacy has been a cornerstone of the KRG's foreign policy, leveraging its significant oil and gas reserves to forge strategic partnerships and attract investment. The KRG's engagement with international oil companies (IOCs) has resulted in the development of oil fields and infrastructure projects, contributing to economic growth and revenue generation. Moreover, the KRG has sought to diversify its economy through trade agreements, tourism initiatives, and foreign investment incentives, fostering sustainable development and job creation. The KRG has pursued an active diplomacy agenda to garner international recognition and support for its regional autonomy and aspirations. Through diplomatic missions, outreach

programs, and participation in international forums, the KRG has engaged with governments, multilateral organizations, and civil society groups to advocate for its political rights and security interests. While challenges persist in achieving full-fledged statehood, the KRG's diplomatic efforts have yielded increased visibility and legitimacy on the global stage.

As a key actor in Iraq's complex political landscape, the KRG has played a constructive role in mediating conflicts and promoting dialogue among rival factions. Through its participation in national reconciliation efforts and intra-Kurdish dialogues, the KRG has sought to mitigate tensions, resolve disputes, and foster stability in Iraq and the wider region. By facilitating peace talks and confidence-building measures, the KRG has positioned itself as a credible mediator and advocate for peaceful coexistence.

The KRG has demonstrated commitment to humanitarian principles by providing assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and

refugees fleeing conflict and persecution. Despite facing economic challenges and resource constraints, the KRG has collaborated with international humanitarian organizations and donor countries to deliver aid, shelter, and essential services to vulnerable populations. By upholding humanitarian values and addressing the needs of displaced communities, the KRG has bolstered its reputation as a responsible actor on the global stage.

The Kurdistan Regional Government's successful foreign policy approach reflects its strategic vision, pragmatism, and adaptability in navigating complex regional dynamics. Through proactive engagement, economic diplomacy, and conflict mediation, the KRG has effectively promoted its interests, enhanced its international standing, and contributed to regional stability. Moving forward, continued dialogue, cooperation, and diplomacy will be essential for the KRG to address emerging challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and advance its aspirations for prosperity, security,

and self-determination.

The Kurds' quest for self-determination dates back centuries, marked by periods of rebellion, repression, and marginalization by central governments in the region. Throughout history, Kurdish aspirations for autonomy have been met with resistance from the ruling authorities, leading to cycles of conflict and displacement. The Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 promised Kurdish statehood but was never realized, further fueling Kurdish grievances and nationalist movements.

Despite these challenges, Kurds in the Middle East continue to advocate for greater autonomy and recognition of their cultural and political rights. In Iraq, the Kurdistan Region has enjoyed a degree of autonomy since the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in 1992. The KRG has its own government, security forces, and parliament, albeit with limitations imposed by the central government in Baghdad.

The Kurdish quest for autonomy intersects with

broader regional dynamics and geopolitical considerations, shaping the responses of neighboring countries and external actors. Turkey, Iran, and Syria view Kurdish aspirations for autonomy as a threat to their territorial integrity and national security, leading to policies aimed at containing Kurdish autonomy and suppressing Kurdish political activism.

The Kurds in the Middle East continue to navigate a complex landscape marked by historical grievances, political fragmentation, and regional tensions. Despite facing formidable challenges, Kurds remain resilient in their pursuit of autonomy, self-governance, and cultural preservation. The path towards achieving these goals is fraught with obstacles, including resistance from central governments, internal conflicts, and external interference. Nevertheless, the Kurdish struggle for recognition and rights remains a defining feature of the region's political landscape, with implications for stability, peace, and democracy in the Middle East.

Challenges of developing the Healthcare System in the Iraq and Middle East



By *Dr. Nojdar Akreyi*

The healthcare landscape in the Middle East is as diverse as the region itself, encompassing a wide range of healthcare systems, resources, and challenges. From oil-rich Gulf countries with advanced healthcare infrastructure to conflict-affected nations grappling with humanitarian crises, the Middle East presents a complex tapestry of healthcare provision. I think that we can explore the intricacies of the health system in the Middle East, highlighting key challenges, recent developments, and potential avenues for improvement. The Middle East is home to a mix of healthcare systems, ranging from well-funded public hos-

Efforts to invest in medical education, training, and capacity building are essential for addressing workforce shortages and improving the quality of healthcare delivery across the region.

pitals and private clinics to under-resourced rural health centers. In countries like the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, significant investments in healthcare infrastructure have led to the development of state-of-the-art hospitals and medical facilities. However, in conflict-affected countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, healthcare infrastructure has been decimated, leading to a shortage of essential medical supplies, personnel, and facilities. Healthcare financing varies across the Middle East, with some countries offering universal healthcare coverage funded by government budgets or social insurance schemes. In countries like Kuwait and Oman, citizens receive free or heavily subsidized healthcare services, while expatriates often rely on private insurance or



out-of-pocket payments. However, in countries with weaker healthcare systems, such as Lebanon and Palestine, access to healthcare is often limited by financial barriers, leaving vulnerable populations at risk of inadequate or unaffordable care. The availability and distribution of healthcare professionals play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of healthcare systems in the Middle East. While countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE attract skilled expatriate healthcare workers through lucrative employment opportunities, others struggle with shortages of trained personnel, particularly in rural and remote areas. Efforts to invest in medical education, training, and capacity building are essential for addressing workforce shortages and improving the quality of healthcare delivery across the region.

The Middle East faces a range of public health challenges, including non-communicable diseases (NCDs), infectious diseases, and mental health disorders. Lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases are on the rise, driven by urbanization, sedentary lifestyles, and changing

dietary habits. Moreover, ongoing conflicts and displacement have exacerbated health risks, leading to outbreaks of communicable diseases, malnutrition, and mental health crises among displaced populations. The adoption of digital health technologies and innovation presents an opportunity to transform healthcare delivery and address some of the challenges facing the Middle East. Countries like the UAE and Israel are at the forefront of leveraging digital health solutions such as telemedicine, electronic health records, and mobile health applications to improve access, efficiency, and patient outcomes. Embracing innovation and investing in digital health infrastructure can help bridge gaps in healthcare access and delivery, particularly in remote and underserved areas. The health system in the Middle East is characterized by a complex interplay of factors, including healthcare infrastructure, financing mechanisms, human resources, public health challenges, and technological innovation. While some countries in the region have made significant strides in advancing healthcare provision and outcomes, others continue to

grapple with systemic weaknesses, resource constraints, and public health crises. Moving forward, addressing these challenges will require sustained investment, collaboration, and innovation to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare for all residents of the Middle East.

The adoption of digital health technologies and innovation presents an opportunity to transform healthcare delivery and address some of the challenges facing the Middle East.

Iraq has a long history of wars, conflicts, economic crises, and social divisions that have directly and indirectly affected the health of its population, such as loss

of life, disabilities, and loss of livelihood. Eight years of war against Iran in the 1980s and the Second Gulf War in 1991, Iraq officially admitted to a crime that destroyed confidentiality. Affected and healthy after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, the country remains clearly committed to neoliberalism in improving the situation of the right to health in Iraq, as he suffers from public health neuropathies due to the lack of policy independence, which has restricted the ability of the health care system to provide its services to the population. In addition, the long history of extensive conflicts has left most Iraqis with levels of various mental health problems and unresolved trauma, but this aspect is rarely addressed by the healthcare system, politicians, journalists and government ministers' guidance. In addition, Iraq faced environmental challenges such as pollution, climate change, heat, and drought. These all have resulted in low water levels that have affected not only human but also their daily life. Food security and agriculture become a challenge.

Raban Boya, the Shrine Uniting Muslims and Christians

Since antiquity, the Kurdistan Region has been the center of religious and ethnic coexistence. There are several villages, districts, towns and cities in the Kurdistan Region where Muslims and Christians or Muslims and Yazidis or Muslims, Yazidis and Christians dwell side by side. Furthermore, they have joint shrines. In other words, Muslims and Christians both agree that such shrines are holy; therefore, they visit the same shrines at separate times.

Raban Boya's Location

The Shrine of Raban Boya, also known as Raban Beri or Wisu Rahman, is located in Shaqlawa, a resort town in Erbil governorate. It is situated in a valley at the skirts of Safin Mountain Range,

mouth of the cave, there is a seven-meter-deep water well dug in the rocks. It was built for storing water and served as a source of water. Moving up the stairs and arriving at the cave, the visitors face an ancient 5X6 meter rock and plaster erected wall that blocks the mouth of the cave. Therefore, an arched-shaped gate to enter the cave is constructed. Walls inside divide the cave into three parts (rooms). Each room hosts a different ceremony. The first part resembles a reception hall. There is a stone called Bardi Mirazan, which is 3x4 meters in size and has a sloping position. Tourists lean down on the stone on their stomachs, praying God for their wishes, especially for having children. It's believed that if the head of the person

Rahman, was actually a follower of Islam. Adding to the mystery, some speculate that the cave may have originally functioned as a Zoroastrian temple.

Despite the ambiguity surrounding its history, certain Christian clerics assert that the shrine's origins can be traced back to the third century BC. Regardless of its exact inception, the shrine holds deep



who come together to pay homage to the sacred site and partake in the spiritual festivities.

Travelling to the Shrine

Every year, a significant number of Christians from across Iraq and around the world visit the shrine, drawn by its sacred significance. Additionally, the location attracts tourists seeking to explore its cultural and historical heritage. The shrine sits along the route to the Jutadar Climax atop Safin Mountain, making it a popular destination for mountaineering groups. These groups, numbering between five to 10 or more weekly, are enchanted by the picturesque landscape and serene atmosphere of the valley, shrine, and surrounding mountain slopes.

significance for both Muslims and Christians, who visit at different times according to their respective traditions. For Christians throughout Iraq, a particularly significant occasion

occurs during the second week following Easter in April. During this time, a grand ceremony takes place, drawing thousands of worshippers, locals, tourists, and even Muslims,

overlooking Shaqlawa. The shrine is more than 2km away from the nearest major road. Half of the path to the shrine has been constructed and asphalted by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), leaving only 30 minutes of walking for the visitors. As a ritual, people walk to the shrine. Half the pedestrian path is paved with stairs; the rest is steep and swirling. The shrine is to the right of the road, connecting the Sarmaydan neighborhood in Shaqlawa to the upper part of the town and stretching further to the Hiran township at the foot of Safin Mountain. The shrine is 40km away from central Erbil.

touches the ground, their wish will come true. Small stones are thrown backward into a high hole in the second part of the cave, which is 4 meters deep. It is believed that if the stone falls into the hole, the wish of the person throwing it will come true. The third room contains a grave which is thought to belong to Raban Boya.

Who Is Raban Boya and Why He Is Holy?

The cave bears signs of human intervention, suggesting deliberate expansion over time. While precise historical records regarding the shrine are lacking, local lore offers intriguing accounts of its origins. According to one narrative, the cave served as a place of worship for a Christian saint known as Raban Boya, who is said to have frequented the site during the third century AD. Conversely, Muslims in the region believe that the saint, known as Wisu



The Structure of the Shrine

The shrine is located in a valley inside a cave high in the mountain. It's 20 meters higher than its surrounding areas. So, stairs are built to lead up to the shrine. Some 30 meters away from the

The area also boasts the remains of an orchard, featuring a variety of fruit trees, both wild and cultivated by humans. This diverse landscape adds to the allure of the site, offering visitors a sensory experience rich with natural beauty and historical charm.

Furthermore, the vantage point of the shrine provides stunning panoramic views of the town of Shaqlawa below, adding an extra layer of fascination for tourists. The opportunity to observe the scenic town from this elevated position enhances the appeal of the religious site, contributing to its popularity among travelers seeking both spiritual and recreational experiences.

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The Rich Tradition of Kurdish Poetry

Echoes of Identity, Resistance, and Resilience

By *Dania Hakim*

Kurdish poetry stands as a testament to the Kurdish people's rich cultural heritage and enduring spirit. With a history spanning centuries, Kurdish poets have used their craft to express the joys, sorrows, hopes, and struggles of their community. From ancient oral traditions to contemporary verse, Kurdish poetry embodies themes of identity, resistance, love, nature, and the human experience. This article delves into the captivating world of Kurdish poetry, exploring its evolution, prominent poets, and enduring significance.

Kurdish poetry traces its origins to the ancient oral traditions of the Kurdish people, dating back to pre-Islamic times. Passed down through generations, these oral poems, known as "dengbêj," were recited by bards and storytellers, preserving the collective memory and cultural identity of the Kurdish community. The themes of heroism, honor, love, and nature featured prominently in these oral compositions, reflecting the values and aspirations of Kurdish society. The emergence of written Kurdish poetry can be traced to the medieval period, with poets like Melayê Cizîrî (1570–1640) and Ehmedê Xanî (1650–1707) making significant contributions to Kurdish literature. Melayê Cizîrî's epic poem "Mem û Zîn," often considered the masterpiece of Kurdish literature, explores themes of love, tragedy, and social justice. Ehmedê Xanî's "Mem û Zîn" remains a source of inspiration for Kurdish poets and writers to this day, showcasing the enduring legacy of classical Kurdish poetry. The 20th century witnessed a resurgence of Kurdish poetry, fueled by political upheavals, cultural movements, and the struggle for Kurdish autonomy. Poets like Ceğrxwîn (1903–1984), the "father of modern Kurdish literature," used their

poetry to advocate for Kurdish rights, celebrate Kurdish culture, and condemn oppression. Ceğrxwîn's lyrical verses, infused with symbolism and metaphor, resonate with themes of resilience, longing for freedom, and pride in Kurdish identity. In the contemporary era, Kurdish poetry continues to evolve and thrive, with a diverse array of voices exploring new themes and forms of expression. Poets like Sherko Bekas (1940–2013) and Abdulla Pashew (b. 1946) have gained international recognition for their innovative and thought-provoking poetry. Sherko Bekas, known for his surreal imagery and existential themes, delves into the complex-

ing the diversity and complexity of Kurdish culture and identity. With its mountains, rivers, and landscapes, nature serves as a recurring motif, symbolizing endurance, resilience, and connection to the homeland. Love, longing, and nostalgia also feature prominently in Kurdish poetry, expressing the universal human experiences of joy, heartache, and yearning for a better future. Kurdish poetry stands as a vibrant and integral part of Kurdish cultural heritage, embodying the collective consciousness and spirit of the Kurdish people. From ancient oral traditions to contemporary verse, Kurdish poets have used their craft to celebrate their identity, resist

Ahmadi Khani, *The Legacy of Kurdish Poetry's Pioneering Voice*. Ahmadi Khani, often hailed as the "Homer of Kurdistan", holds a revered place in Kurdish literature as one of its most influential and celebrated poets. His magnum opus, "Mem û Zîn," is not only a literary masterpiece but also a cultural touchstone that has resonated with generations of Kurds, inspiring pride in their heritage and identity. In this article, we delve into the life, works, and enduring legacy of Ahmadi Khani, exploring the profound impact of his poetry on Kurdish culture and literature. Ahmadi Khani was born in the late 17th century in the village of

influenced his worldview and poetic sensibilities. Ahmadi Khani's most enduring contribution to Kurdish literature is his epic poem "Mem û Zîn," which he composed in the late 17th century. Written in classical Kurdish and influenced by Persian literary traditions, "Mem û Zîn" tells the tragic love story of Mem, a Kurdish prince, and Zîn, a beautiful maiden from a rival tribe. The poem is divided into ten books, each containing richly woven narratives, vivid descriptions, and profound philosophical reflections on love, destiny, and human nature. "Mem û Zîn" is replete with themes and symbolism that resonate deeply with Kurdish culture and identity. The

celebrates the beauty and resilience of Kurdistan's land and people. Ahmadi Khani's "Mem û Zîn" has had a profound and enduring impact on Kurdish literature, serving as a source of inspiration for generations of poets, writers, and intellectuals. The poem has been translated into numerous languages and continues to be studied, recited, and revered by Kurds worldwide. Khani's pioneering use of the Kurdish language and his exploration of universal themes have earned him a place among the greatest poets in Kurdish literary history. In addition to his literary achievements, Ahmadi Khani played a pivotal role in the cultural revival and preservation of Kurdish identity during a period of political upheaval and external pressures. Through his poetry, Khani sought to instill a sense of pride, resilience, and unity among Kurds, encouraging them to cherish their language, history, and heritage. His enduring legacy as a cultural icon continues to inspire Kurds in their quest for recognition, dignity, and self-expression. Ahmadi Khani's legacy as a pioneering voice in Kurdish poetry transcends time and borders, resonating with the collective consciousness and aspirations of the Kurdish people. Through his epic masterpiece "Mem û Zîn," Khani immortalized the beauty, resilience, and spirit of Kurdistan, leaving an indelible mark on Kurdish literature and culture for centuries to come. As Kurds continue to navigate the complexities of their history and identity, the enduring legacy of Ahmadi Khani serves as a beacon of inspiration and pride, reminding them of their rich cultural heritage and the power of poetry to transcend boundaries and unite hearts.



ities of human existence and the search for meaning. Abdulla Pashew's poetry, marked by its simplicity and emotional depth, captures the struggles and aspirations of the Kurdish people with poignant clarity. Kurdish poetry encompasses a wide range of themes and symbolism, reflect-

oppression, and express the timeless truths of the human condition. As Kurdish poetry continues to evolve and inspire, it serves as a testament to the enduring power of language, art, and creativity in shaping the destiny of a people and preserving their legacy for generations to come.

Hakkari, located in present-day Turkey. Little is known about his early life, but he received a traditional education in Kurdish literature, Islamic theology, and Persian poetry. Khani's upbringing in the rugged mountains of Kurdistan, with its rich oral traditions and cultural heritage, deeply

love story of Mem and Zîn serves as a metaphor for the enduring struggle of the Kurdish people for freedom, justice, and self-determination. The poem's portrayal of honor, loyalty, and sacrifice reflects the values and ethos of Kurdish society, while its evocative imagery of nature and landscape



Kurdish as Heart-Language

The term 'heart language', usually refers to the local or regional language. It is the language that is most natural and meaningful to a person, the language that one grew up speaking and understanding best. The term is often used as the opposite of the second language and greatly affects communication. Its effect appears not only when two or more people communicate and don't understand each other, then the phrase 'what do you mean?' comes, but also permeates every facet of daily existence. In essence, it encapsulates the concept of the "Mother tongue." For us, our heart language is Kurdish.

In the vibrant, multilingual community of Kurdistan, the Kurdish language holds a special place as the heart language. Over the past decade, there have been endeavors to advocate that certain disciplines, such as science, are better comprehended in secondary or official languages. While this assertion may hold merit in terms of comprehension, the efficacy of communication is undeniably heightened when conducted in the heart language. Recent studies have underscored this phenomenon, demonstrating that even religious messages resonate

more deeply and are more impactful when conveyed in the mother tongue—the language of the heart. A notable example is the renowned translation of the Holy Quran by Mam Hazhar, which continues to captivate readers and remains a subject of inquiry among people and scholars.

In many households, parents communicate in their respective heart languages, fostering a sense of cultural and familial connection. Meanwhile, children often acquire a global or secondary language through schooling, leading them to navigate between languages based on various contexts and considerations. However, the heart language retains its centrality, proving to be the most fitting and versatile choice across different situations.

#Heart language is, then the language of the Heart!

The notion of the "heart language" encapsulates a profound expression of respect and affection, where words flow effortlessly, reflecting one's deepest sentiments. When conveyed in the heart language, a message is intricately shaped by one's own cultural nuances, imbuing it with authenticity and resonance. Public figures,

for instance, wield significant influence by employing their mother tongue, adeptly captivating the hearts and minds of their audience. This is particularly evident in the speeches delivered by Mullas on Fridays midday mass-prayer, where the use of Kurdish as an effective medium profoundly impacts the Kurdish speech community.

Poetry serves as a quintessential example of the power of the heart language. Poets masterfully manipulate their heart language, crafting verses that resonate deeply and are often committed to memory. While a poem composed in a secondary or foreign language may still evoke emotions, a unique potency in one's own language and culture renders it most effective and enduring. Thus, the heart language emerges as the true language of the heart, transcending mere linguistic communication to convey the essence of one's being.

#Heart languages also die!

Linguists have underscored a poignant analogy, likening languages to living entities that undergo birth, growth, and eventual demise. Whether a language serves as one's

mother tongue, second language, or foreign language, its survival hinges upon sustainable usage. Regrettably, numerous languages find themselves on the brink of extinction, once vibrant heart languages now relegated to the periphery of everyday communication.

Endangered languages are the ones at risk of disappearing as their speakers die out or move to speak other languages. Fortunately, the Kurdish language is in its growing stage; thousands of books have been translated into the Kurdish language (despite our notice of the language of translation). Today, Educational language, social media, regular practice, cultural engagement, etc. prevent the Kurdish language from disappearing.

However, the journey toward linguistic preservation remains ongoing; necessitating continued dedication and heightened endeavors to safeguard the Kurdish language for future generations.

#The shadow of heart language on the second and foreign languages!

It's been years since teachers have warned language learners to engage in thinking processes using the language they are attempting to learn. How-

ever, the shadow of their heart language runs after them and tries to catch them in every single word and phrase they express in the second language (like mine!). The main reason is not only that, that person is not very expert in the culture of the second language, but sometimes the speaker believes that the expression is not the one he/she is trying to express!

#Heart language among English teachers!

Indeed, within educational contexts, particularly in departments focused on second or foreign languages such as English, certain expressions like "What do you mean?" or "I mean..." often emerge as readily deployable tools when teachers encounter challenges in conveying their message to students. In such instances, educators may resort to utilizing elements of their heart language to better articulate their intentions. This dynamic often leads to instances of code-switching and code-mixing, where linguistic elements from multiple languages are interwoven to facilitate communication and comprehension between teacher and student. This fluidity in language usage underscores the complex-

ities inherent in multilingual learning environments and highlights the adaptability of educators in navigating linguistic barriers to effectively impart knowledge.

In conclusion, the heart language profoundly reflects one's identity, nationality, and even love. Its consistent usage across various aspects of life signifies a deep and genuine connection to the issues at hand. By prioritizing the heart language, individuals contribute to the preservation and vitality of their mother tongue, thereby safeguarding it from the threat of extinction posed by endangered languages.

Fortunately, in Kurdistan, parents have a growing awareness of the importance of imparting Kurdish language skills to their children. Additionally, efforts in translation, particularly in fields such as the sciences, are expanding, laying a crucial foundation for national development. This concerted effort towards linguistic preservation and enhancement strengthens cultural identity and holds the potential to foster broader societal advancement.

By: Sangar Hassan Najim

Harmony on the Pitch: Kurdish Players' Impact in Iraq's Asian Cup Run

From triumphs to trials, the call for fair opportunities grows louder as some think Kurdish players should be given more chances

In the aftermath of Iraq's spirited campaign at the Asian Cup, a call for recognizing the immense talent of Kurdish players echoes through the football community. Coach Jesus Casas's diverse squad included six Kurdish players, each contributing uniquely to the team's success, sparking conversations about the need for increased opportunities for these players.

In the defensive line, the prowess of Merkhas Doski from the Czech League and Alan Mohedeen from the Swedish League was evident, showcasing the depth and versatility

within the Kurdish talent pool. The midfield boasted four more exceptional Kurdish players:

Osama Rashid (Portuguese league), Yousef Amin (German

league), Ahmad Ali (French league), and Akam Hashem from the Iraqi league's Erbil club.

The group stage saw Iraq triumph in all three encounters, securing a spot in the quarterfinals as the top team in their group. Notably, during this phase, some Kurdish players, including Akam Hashem, had limited opportunities on the field, sparking discussions about the potential impact of in-

creased participation.

In the post-tournament reflections, Akam Hashem shed light on the situation, expressing gratitude for Coach Casas's attention while voicing his desire for more playing time. Hashem highlighted a missed chance against Jordan, emphasizing his commitment to contributing to the team's success and expressing hope for a future role in World Cup qualifiers.

Coach Casas, acknowledging the contributions of players like Fahd Taleb and Akam Hashem, issued an

apology for the limited playing time during the group stage. The coach expressed optimism for their participation in future games, acknowledging the valuable relationships formed within the team.

As Akam Hashem contemplates future career moves amid offers from clubs within and outside Iraq, he remains focused on making an informed decision. His commitment to excellence and a desire for more playing time resonates as a testament to the potential within Kurdish players.

"I am grateful for coach Casas's attention, but I yearn for more opportunities on the field. Against Jordan, circumstances denied me a chance, but I remain committed to contributing to our team's success. My focus is on the future, and I aspire to play a significant role in the upcoming World Cup qualifiers." Hashem told The Kurdish Globe

When asked if he has received any offers from other clubs outside of Iraq, Hashem said "Actually I got offers from both: the domestic league clubs, and clubs outside of Iraq. But I would prefer to stay in Erbil for this season."

Hashem, known for his connections with fellow players, also shared insights into the friend-

ship within the squad. He spoke highly about Ahmad Ali, his closest friend in the national team, and expressed positive relations with Alan Mohedeen and Osama Rashid. Such camaraderie, reflective of the team's unity, adds a layer of depth to their collective journey.

The Asian Cup journey has not only showcased Iraq's football prowess but also ignited a conversation about the equitable distribution of opportunities for Kurdish players. As the football community eagerly awaits their next endeavor, the call for increased playing time for these talented individuals is bound to shape the discourse surrounding Iraq's football landscape.

Iraq have appeared in the finals of the AFC Asian Cup on 9 occasions in 1972 to 1976, 1996 to 2019. Their best ever performance was as champions in the 2007 tournament held in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam respectively.

The 2024 Asia Cup was held in Qatar and the host country successfully defended their Asian Cup crown after beating Jordan 3-1 on Feb 10 at Lusail Stadium where Akram Afif converted three penalties as the hosts won their second continental title.



Shokhan Nouraddin: Saudi Football's Top Scorer

In a dazzling display of talent and goal-scoring prowess, Shokhan Nouraddin, the Kurdish star hailing from Saudi Al-Hilal, has etched her name as the all-time leading scorer in the Saudi Women's Premier League, a feat that rivals even the likes of football icon Cristiano Ronaldo.

Originally from Erbil, Nouraddin made headlines when she inked a two-season contract with Al Hilal in 2022. Fast-forward to the present, and she has not only upheld

that commitment but has also become a force to be reckoned with on the field, netting an impressive 52 goals. Her exceptional speed and ball control have set her apart as a standout player in the league.

One of the standout moments in Nouraddin's goal-scoring journey was when she netted a staggering 15 goals in a single game against the Bayra club. Last season alone, she recorded a remarkable 43 goals in just 14 appearances. As the current

season unfolds, Nouraddin continues to rewrite records and capture the attention of not only local fans but also European clubs.

The extraordinary abilities of this Kurdish athlete have garnered interest from European clubs, with multiple offers on the table. Nouraddin's remarkable goal-scoring spree and dynamic performances have made her a sought-after talent, paving the way for a potential international career.

As Shokhan Nouraddin

continues to leave an indelible mark on the Saudi Women's Premier League, her story transcends borders, showcasing the immense talent and potential within women's football. The allure of her skills has not only elevated Al Hilal but has also positioned Nouraddin as a rising star on the global football stage. The football world eagerly watches as this Kurdish sensation navigates her career, poised for greater heights and potential international acclaim.





Folklore Spotlight

Hassan Zirak

Hassan Zirak, the legendary Kurdish singer, was born in Harmileh, part of Saqqez County, near Bukan in northwestern Persia. His birthplace, once a part of the Sublime State of Persia, now holds historical significance in the Kurdish cultural narrative.

Born to Abdulla Zirek and Amina, Hassan inherited not only a name but also a legacy of talent. His father's remarkable abilities in the Xan of the Agha of Hermêle influenced the young Hassan's upbringing.

Tragedy struck early in Hassan's life when his father passed away when he was just five years old. His mother's remarriage left him emotionally shattered. At the age of 12, he began working for the Agha of Hermêle, where his enchanting voice became a source of joy for the villagers. Agha is a title given to a leader of a group and Hermêle is a small village in Bukan region in West Azerbaijan province of Iran.

Hassan left his birth village at 13, seeking opportunities in the main Kurdish cities. His journey took him to various restaurants, where his singing talents became evident. In 1953, at 27, he left Harmelah and made a significant mark by recording numerous Kurdish songs for Baghdad's broadcasting station.

However, political upheavals forced him to leave Iraq after the 1958 revolution. He relocated to Tehran, working at the Tehran Radio Station, where he met his wife, Medya Zendi. In 1960, circumstances compelled him to leave Iran for Kurdistan of Iraq, collaborating with the Kurdish Fine Art Groups.

Hassan Zirak left Kurdistan in 1967, settling in Saqqez, Iran, where he spent the rest of his life. In 1971, he faced a formidable adversary – stage four cancer. Nights at Urmia and Bukan hospitals became a somber routine until his passing at the age of 50.

Despite his illiteracy, Hassan Zirak's prolific career produced around 1500 songs, showcasing his unique free-style folk singing. He is celebrated not only for his contributions to Sorani Kurdish but also for singing in languages like Azeri, Turkish, and Persian. His legacy endures as one of the most beloved and well-known figures in Northern and Eastern Kurdistan, with timeless collaborations with fellow artists like Mamle, Mala Hussain Abdulzada, Osman Bukani, and Ahmed Shamal.



Erbil Pays Tribute to Abbas Abdullah Yousef's Literary Contributions



In a ceremony held on Monday, February 12, 2024, the Directorate of Literary Activities in General Directorate of Culture and Arts of Erbil, in collaboration with the Erbil Branch of the Kurdish Writers

Union, orchestrated an event at the Shahid Mahdi Khoshnaw Hall. The occasion, graced by the presence of Mr. Omid Khoshnaw, Erbil's Governor, spotlighted the celebrated writer and poet, Abbas Abdullah

Yousef. Attendees gathered to honor Yousef's remarkable contributions to literature and the arts, marking the evening with reverence and appreciation for his profound impact.

Kurdish films will be screened free of charge in cinemas in Erbil



As an incentive to increase the audience of Kurdish films in cinemas, every Wednesday, the Erbil Cinema Arts Directorate will screen Kurdish films free of charge.

Kirkuk Cultural Center Hosts Third Festival of Peace and Brotherhood

The Kirkuk Cultural Center recently served as the venue for the third Festival of Peace and Brotherhood, featuring participation from national teams representing Kurdistan and Iraq.

Kosrat Qadir, a member of the Erbil National Arts Troupe, shared his thoughts on the event:

"This marks the third round of the Festival of Peace and Brotherhood. Our troupe had the privilege of performing a traditional Kurdish dance, which was well-received by the audience. I sincerely hope such festivals become an annual tradition, fostering unity and harmony in the hearts of all."

"Nazdar Jaziri's New Song 'Qismat' Sparks Romance on Valentine Day"

In celebration of Valentine Day, renowned artist Nazdar Jaziri has unveiled her latest musical creation, titled "Qismat," on her official YouTube channel. This enchanting melody, crafted by Jaziri herself, is accompanied by lyrics that speak to the

heart, complemented by the soulful composition of musician Siamak Faqizadeh. The song, meticulously recorded by musician Afshin Shukri, comes to life in a captivating music video directed by Imra Öz-bilen.

