



# ***The Path to Jīn, Jiyan, Azadi: Kurdish Feminist Resistance Throughout History***

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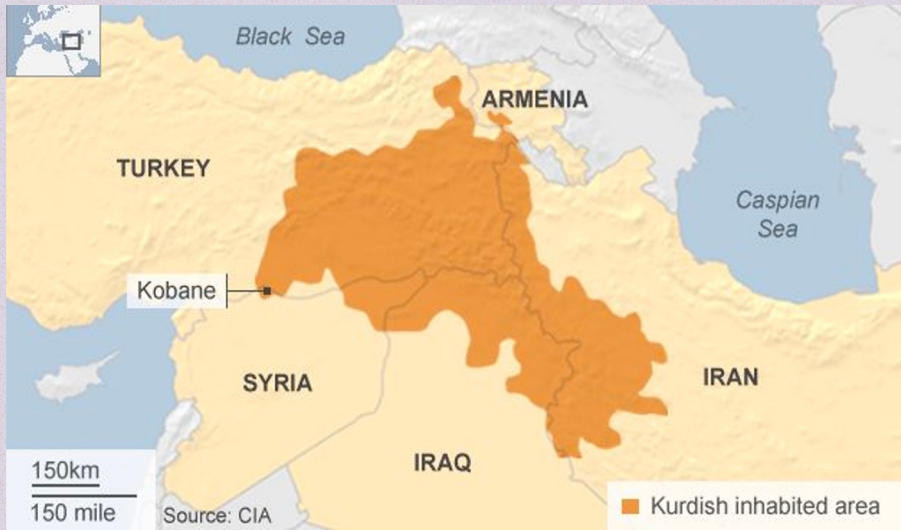


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- ❖ Current “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi” Movement in Iran
- ❖ One year later, what has come of the movement?











# Kurds, a Distinct Ethnic Group

- ❖ Indigenous to the Zagros mountains and reside across the borders of Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Armenia.
- ❖ Fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East
  - Between 45 to 50 million Kurds in the Levant region
  - About 2 million Kurds living in diaspora as a result of genocide, political oppression, and labor migration.
- ❖ Considered the largest stateless people in the world and the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East
- ❖ Kurds constitute about 23% of Turkey's population, 23% of Iraq's population, and 10% of Iran's population

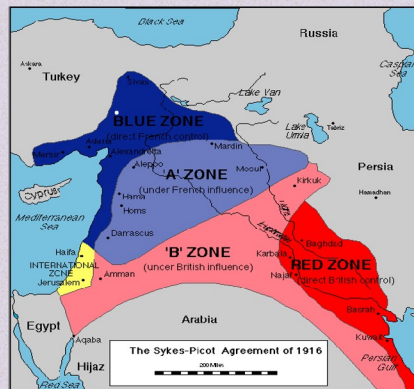






# The “Kurdish Question” and the Legacy of Colonialism

- ❖ The fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I
  - Sykes Picot Agreement of 1916
  - The Treaty of Sevres signed in 1920
  - The Treaty of Lausanne signed in 1923 and established modern day Turkey
  
- ❖ The “Kurdish Question” was first mentioned in 1946
  
- ❖ Kurds have been subjected to different policies varying from cultural assimilation to massacres, and have been perceived as “pseudo-citizens” while inhabiting their native land (Yegen, 2009)







# Role of Kurdish Women in Society

- ❖ Distinct separation of the public and private spheres in Kurdish society.
- ❖ In the autonomous Kurdistan region of Iraq, women have the right to vote, work, attend school, and drive.
- ❖ Still face informal discrimination and systemic oppression when it comes to power and agency in issues of marriage, divorce, domestic violence, and honor killings.
- ❖ There is a significant number of women that join the PKK and YPG forces, which describe themselves as a Kurdish revolutionaries and freedom fighters.







# Theoretical Foundations of Kurdish Feminism

- ❖ Kurdish feminism has a theoretical basis similar to indigenous, marxist and transnational feminism.
  - The identity of Kurdish women has also become complicated by the colonial borders and the occupation of their land.
  - Racial and gender dynamics in Kurdish society have also been shaped by colonialism.
  - Differs from US based indigenous feminism on the basis of nationalism, there is not a nationalist dimension in US based indigenous feminism.
- ❖ “Anti-colonial, anti-capitalist politics, revolutionary social change, climate justice, system-critical theory, and democracy without the state.” (Dirik, 2021)







“Kurdish women’s relationship to history and knowledge production is intrinsically linked to their antagonistic relationship to the state. As Kurds and as women, both the absence of ‘evidence’ of their existence and their contribution to history have been enabled by and have further enabled systematic eradication, denial, and forced assimilation.”

- Dilar Dirik,

*The Kurdish Women’s Movement History, Theory, Practice (2021)*







# Poetry

- ❖ Expressed resistance against forced marriages, polygamy, and child marriages through poetry.
- ❖ Among the themes of love, there were also heavy themes of nationalism in Kurdish women's poetry.
- ❖ Promoted the indulgence of desire and consensual love and agency.







“Both of us,  
In the colourful geometry of our  
senses,  
Were looking for a sharp triangle,  
So as to fix life,  
Love and  
Kurdistan  
To its sharp angles.”

- **Mehabad Qeredagî,**  
**“The Carnival of Wounds in  
the Diaspora’s Evening”  
(1999)**

“My wounds are the  
Homeland of thousands of  
disappeared Anfal victims  
Place of the secret of hundreds of  
Halabja and Badinan martyrs  
My wounds are the wounds of  
Kirkuk’s head and Diyarbakir’s back  
Mahabad’s shoulder and Qamishli’s  
forehead.”

- **Mehabad Qeredagî,**  
**“Eşqî Agir” (The Love of Fire)  
(1999)**

“I would love to utter your name.  
Ah, what a magic name this is!  
I am sure I am the luckiest  
woman.  
That a man like you loves me and  
I am much luckier.  
That you have allowed me to  
love you.”

- **Dişsoz Heme,**  
***Le Kotayîda Bîrm  
Kewtewe Temaşay Xom  
Bikem (At the End I  
Remembered to Look at  
Myself) (1996)***







# Magazines

- ❖ The first formal Kurdish women's organization, the Society for the Advancement of Kurdish Women, was founded in 1919 in Turkey.
- ❖ The editorial team of the magazine Roza had identified themselves as:
  - “a group of Kurdish women who, despite representing diverse views on women's liberation and politics, perceive their common aim in speaking out as both Kurds and feminists.”



Digital scan of the cover of an issue of the Kurdish feminist magazine, *Roza*, from 1997.







# Language

- ❖ Kurdish was outlawed by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1924, which lasted until 1991.
- ❖ “The personal is political” (Hanisch, 1969)
- ❖ Matrilineality of the Kurdish language and it’s survival in the domestic sphere.







# Guerilla Warfare

- ❖ The YPG (People's Defense Unit) in Syria and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) in Turkey are the most active and recognized guerrilla groups in Kurdistan
- ❖ Sakine Cansiz was a co-founder of the PKK, established in 1974.
- ❖ Most well known form of activism by Kurdish women is their tactical usage of guerilla warfare to resist oppressive regimes in Turkey and Syria.











# “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi” Movement in Iran

- The slogan was first used by Kurdish women in the late 20th century.
- Appropriation of the phrase “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi”
- Mahsa Amini is the name used by Western media outlets, instead of her Kurdish name Jina.
- Criminalization of Kurds by the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- In 2019, half of the political prisoners in Iran were Kurdish but Kurds only make up 10% of the country’s population.








# One Year Later

- ❖ Since the protests broke out in the Kurdistan region of Iran, many Kurdish activists have been imprisoned or executed for engaging in the movement.
- ❖ Worldwide attention on the movement has dwindled, but Kurds and Iranians are still actively protesting with many women refusing to wear hijab.
- ❖ About 2 weeks ago, a 16-year old Kurdish girl was hospitalized after becoming comatose from an alleged encounter with Iran's morality police for not wearing a hijab.







“I love life and want to hold onto it. But my passion for justice for my tormented people, for their dignity and freedom, must be greater still. For of what value is a life of slavery, of humiliation and contempt for that which you hold most dear: Your identity!”

- Leyla Zana, *“Writings from Prison”* (1999)







**Questions?**







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