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QUOTE OF THE WEEK



**She is all my heart,
She is my life, my blood,
There is no space for belief or disbelief,
My existence has no reason but her.
You are the scent of the essence of spring,
You are the delicate fragrance of the rose
brought by the breeze from blissful fields,
You are the perfume of scorched earth after rain.
My darling,
through the crack of my darkened window,**

**I look for the eyes of the daughter of light,
Of all the songs that time murmurs,
I listen to the whisper of the tiny pebbles of the pure source.**

Mojgan Eftekhari, the mother of Jina Mahsa Amini, in her speech to the European Parliament during [the ceremony](#) in which Jina and the Woman, Life, Freedom movement were awarded the Sakharov Prize for Human Rights. As Jina's family could not be present themselves due to [a ban to leave the country](#) imposed by the Iranian regime, the family's lawyer, Saleh Nikbakht, read out Mrs. Eftekhari's speech. [The full speech is here.](#)

Medya News reporter Sarah Glynn was at the AP in Strassbourg and [had an interview with Saleh Nikbakht.](#)

Next week, 24 December, Expert Kurdistan will go out, but not the week after that, on 31 December. Just so you know! Meanwhile, if you know of other people who would be interested in Expert Kurdistan, do send them [the link to where they can subscribe](#)! If they wish to subscribe via Paypal, they can send the money to my Paypal account, f.geerdink at gmail.com, and add 'newsletter' (preferably without the K-word). Thanks!

NEWS

New 'Social Contract' in Northeast-Syria

The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria has adopted a new 'Social Contract'. The document was put together in consultation with a wide range of civil society groups. Drafting it took several years. The Social Contract was published in Kurdish, Arabic and Syriac, the three official languages of the administration.

The preamble to the document, which can be seen as a constitution, says that the autonomous administration is an integral part of Syria, and that the established democratic system could serve as a blueprint for the development of democracy in the whole of Syria. The document puts women's liberation at the forefront of the liberation of the whole of society.

The document is an updated version of the 'Charter of the Social Contract of Rojava', a document that was presented in 2014 and reformed in 2016.



[More at the Rojava Information Center](#), which has translated the full document to English. Picture of the press conference announcing the new Social Contract.

COMMENT

A two-state solution for Kurdistan and Turkey - the questions it raises

In a piece at the Middle East Forum, [Michael Rubin advocates](#) for a two-state solution to solve the Kurdish issue in Turkey. One of the facts he points out, is that the Turkish army has killed many more Kurds than Israel has murdered Palestinians, so if we advocate for a Palestinian state, why not for a Kurdish one? Advocate all you like, of course, but it's good to keep a few questions in mind.

1. Do Kurds in Turkey want to solve the Kurdish issue by establishing an independent Kurdistan?

In the years that I reported from Turkey and Kurdistan, I have asked this question to countless Kurds in Bakur (Kurdistan in Turkey) and in cities outside Bakur. A majority of them answered 'yes'. Part of them reluctantly I have to add, because the Kurdish movement in Turkey doesn't advocate for separatism but for democratization for the whole of Turkey.

Often in Bakur, the answer would be "We don't want a state", or "The leader [Öcalan] tells us that a state is not the solution", but pressed about what they would personally want, they would admit that a state was their ultimate dream. One answer I'll never forget is: "Maybe the grand children of my grand children will live in an independent Kurdistan."

2. How to define what Kurds want?

A referendum would be a great idea, of course. But who gets to vote? Kurds in Bakur, living on historical Kurdish lands, of course, but how about the millions of Kurds who live in Istanbul, Adana, Mersin, Izmir, Ankara and many other cities and towns? Are they 'diaspora' and as such not eligible to vote? Is that fair? And if you do allow Kurds in the whole of Turkey to vote, how do you define who is a Kurd and who isn't? Do you get to vote if you have at least one Kurdish parent? At least one Kurdish grandparent? This is not registered in

Turkey (because everybody is a Turk) so how do you know who meets which definition? What is a Kurd to begin with? A Kurdish scholar once told me: “A Kurd is a person who identifies himself as a Kurd.” Now that is a recipe for chaos (and fraude) when it comes to deciding who gets to vote and who doesn't.



3. Who gets to live in Kurdistan?

Kurds, obviously. Kurdistan is the nation-state of the Kurds. So, what's going to happen to the Kurds of Istanbul, and those millions of Kurds in the other cities I mentioned earlier? Would they have to move to Bakur? And how about Turks who live in Bakur: can they stay, or do they have to leave?

This is reminiscent of when the Republic of Turkey was founded, and the Treaty of Lausanne arranged for the 'population exchange' (an euphemism for ethnic cleansing) of Greeks and Turks. Maybe the Kurds in Turkey who don't live in Bakur, want to stay where they are – which is fine, if the remains of the Turkish state allows them to. Or would Turkey forcibly return everybody with roots in Bakur to where they came from?

4. What about Kurdistan in Iran, Iraq and Syria?

Kurdistan is bigger than Bakur. What would dictatorships like the Iranian and Syrian regime do when there is an official country called Kurdistan? Expell their Kurdish populations to that new state? If not willingly, then forcibly?

And how about the Kurds in Iraq? They have autonomy already and have voted overwhelmingly for independence in 2017. Would the independence of Bakur bring closer their aspirations to break away from Iraq? Would Başur and Bakur become 'Kurdistan' together? Under whose rule? After all, the political movement in Bakur is ideologically radically opposed to the Kurdish administration in Başur. The movement in Bakur and Turkey wants democracy along the lines of democratic confederalism (see the Social Contract in the news section above), while Kurdistan in Iraq is capitalist and more tribal.

This also deepens the perspective on the issue of second question, about who gets to decide. Imagine there is a referendum among Kurds in Turkey about independence: what will the stances be? The political movement as it is now, opposes a Kurdish nation-state and wants the democratization of the whole of



Turkey (and all the lands where Kurds live, for starters). Would the Kurdish movement campaign against the two-state solution? That would be interesting, or awkward. Or would there be three options to vote for: a. an independent Kurdistan, b. democracy for all, or c.

keep the Turkish Republic as it is. Majority wins? Or the two options that get the most votes go for a second round for a 51% victory? What if c. wins? And if c. is an option, wouldn't everybody in Turkey get the right to vote? Should democracy be left to a plebiscite?

5. What about what Musa Anter said?

Musa Anter (pictured), one of the most respected intellectuals Kurdistan ever had (who was [murdered by the state in 1992](#)), once said that Kurds shouldn't give up on Istanbul, Izmir and Adana – and other cities. According to him, these cities belong to Kurds as well. Kurds shouldn't be seen as minorities in Turkey, but as co-owners of the land.

Not only Kurds and Turks could be considered co-owners of the land, Armenians, Greeks and Arabs as well, and other nations. What would the repercussions of an independent Kurdistan be for those groups?

Can the state be a solution for Kurdistan? Or for Palestine? Is the dream a Kurdistan passport? Or freedom? For whom? Difficult, necessary questions.

Mother, Politician, Guerrilla

Monday 8 January: launch of the book [The Mother, The Politician and the Guerrilla](#), Women's Political Imagination in the Kurdish Movement, by Nazan Üstündağ, at the Institute for European Ethnology in Berlin, Germany. The event can be followed via Zoom as well – click the blue button for the Zoom link. More info on [this poster](#).

Also this week...



... a Yezidi teenager, Rojîn Hedad, was [reunited with his family](#) in Şengal after nine years in ISIS captivity. Screenshot from [this video at Medya News](#).

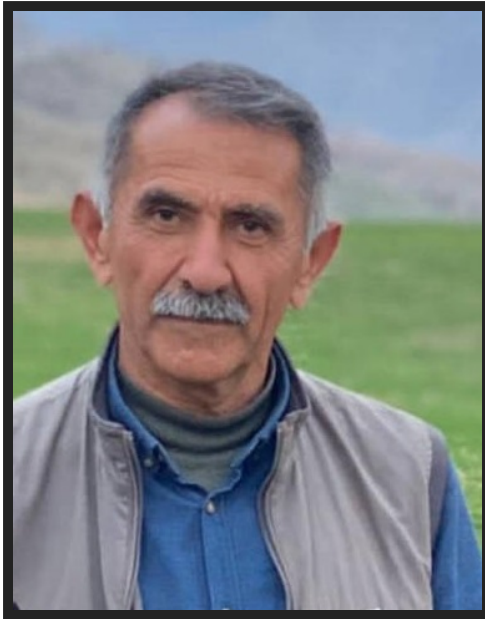
... it was Kurdistan Flag Day in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq. Ever wondered about the origins of the flag? [Check the Jiyān Archives](#).

... the new acronym of HEDEP is [DEM Parti](#), and the logo of the party was adjusted accordingly. The People's Equality and Democracy Party changed the acronym because a Turkish court ruled that HEDEP resembled HADEP too much – HADEP was one of the predecessors of DEM Parti that was founded in 1994 and banned in 2003. 'Dem' is more than just short for 'democracy': it means 'time' in Kurdish.



... lawmakers, police officers, internally displaced persons and [military personnel](#) could already vote in the Iraqi regional elections, to be held tomorrow (18 December). They vote early because of their duties on election day. Yezidi Prince Hazim Tahsin Beg [called on Yezidis](#) to go voting. KRG President Nechirvan Barzani and the UN envoy to Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met and stressed the importance of safeguarding the electoral process, especially in the territories disputed between Baghdad and Erbil, [Kurdistan24 reported](#).

The UN will, however, not be monitoring the elections as they received [no such request](#) from Baghdad.



... a local representative of DEM Parti, Ahmet Gün (pictured), [was murdered](#) in Şenoba, Şırnak province. His cousin Abdurrahim was severely injured. Reportedly, they had been [under threat](#) for some time already. The Gün family [accuses village guards](#) (which are state sponsored militias) of the murder.

... Seywan Ebrahimi, a Kurdish language teacher and a member of the board of directors of a Kurdish social-cultural association, was sentenced to eleven years in prison, [Hengaw reported](#). Another Kurd,

Hassan Mardani, was sentenced to [three years in prison](#) for 'membership of KDPI'.

... kids in the Kurdish neighborhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh in Aleppo, Syria, are shivering in their classrooms because there is not enough fuel or coal to heat them, [Hawar News reported](#). The neighborhoods have been suffering from sieges by the Syrian government for months, affecting not only fuel and coal but also food supplies.

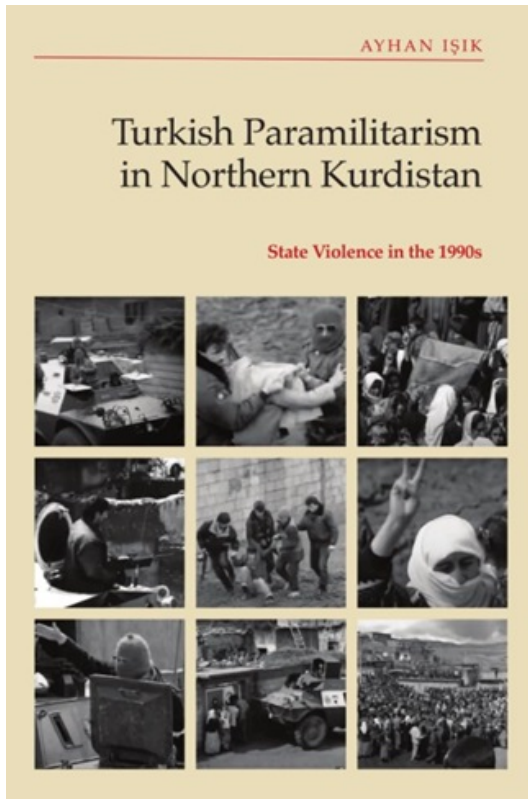
... yours truly published a piece on New Lines Magazine about the victory of far-right politician Wilders in the Dutch elections, reported from the ground in Lombok neighborhood in Utrecht, where she lives closeby. [Read the full piece here](#) – with a lot of thanks to the kind and brilliant [Amie Ferris-Rotman](#) for editing.



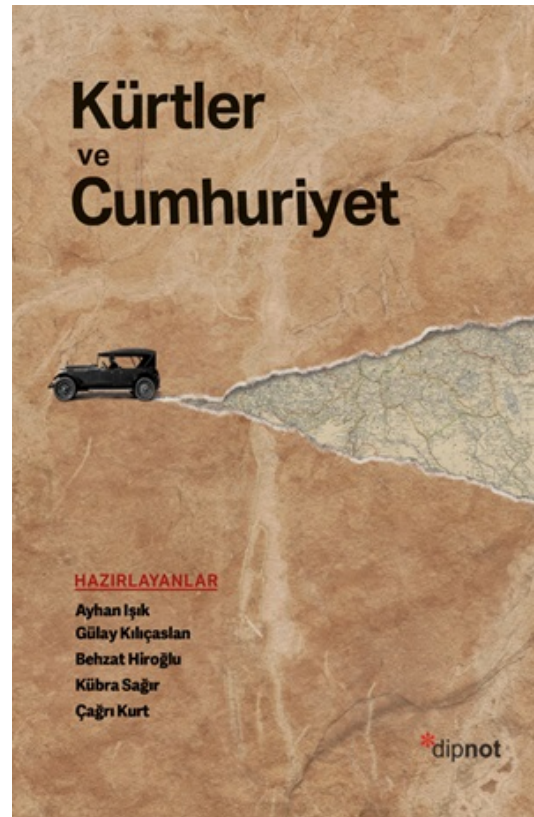
... a çiğköfte-master in Amed, Bilal Yakut, launched a dish called [çiğköftelatta](#): raw (vegetarian) meatballs kneaded with chocolate. Gross or brilliant? Only one way to find out!

... also in Amed, the Mezopotamya Book Fair [was opened](#), and will continue until 24 December. There was [some controversy](#) on the first day: a speech of AKP politician and former deputy PM of Turkey Bülent Arınç took longer than planned, as a result of which an interview with Kurdish poet Berken Bereh had to be postponed. The latter considered that a 'disrespect to the Kurdish

language' and wanted to cancel his event all together. Eventually, the interview with Bereh was held in the entrance hall of the fair.



'[Turkish Paramilitarism in Northern Kurdistan](#), State Violence in the 1990s', by Ayhan Işık, was published at Edinburgh University Press. Use the code NEW30 to get a 30% discount. Or wait for the cheaper e-version, which Expert Kurdistan will inform you about.



[Kürtler ve Cumhuriyet](#) (Kurds and The Republic) constitutes an encyclopedic collection of a hundred articles contributed by more than hundred Kurdish scholars, covering diverse topics related to Kurds and their political subjectivities under the rule of the Turkish Republic. Full list of contributors and chapters [here](#). The book will be available in Kurdish and English too and of course, Expert Kurdistan will keep you posted on that.



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