

Email

Dear Friend,

This week we are going to pray for the Kurdish people, who are scattered across various countries in the Middle East, without their own official homeland. A popular Kurdish proverb says, "The Kurds have no friends but the mountains." They are the largest ethnic group in the world without a nation of their own, despite making up the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East.

Even if they do not have an earthly home we know that they have a place in God's Kingdom and that he longs for the Kurdish people to come to know Him.

May God mightily bless and encourage you as you pray and intercede.

For His Glory in the Nations,

Charlie

Prayer Coordinator

**Monday 6th June**

### **The plight of the Kurds**

The Kurdish people have travelled a difficult road over decades and their trials are still ongoing in many places. They feel they are just the pawns of larger more powerful nations.

In the first Gulf War (1990 – 1991), the Kurds supported the West in their fight against Saddam Hussein in Iraq, in return for the West supporting them with their quest for independence. This didn't happen and when the Kurds were crushed and fled to Turkey and Iran, it was often on foot as there were not enough vehicles to transport everyone.

In the second Gulf War in 2003, the Kurds again fought alongside the coalition that finally removed Saddam, in the hope that they would have greater autonomy and feel like a true partner in Iraq. They also hoped for Western support when they sought to establish their own country within Iraq's borders. The Kurds again fought alongside the coalition against ISIS; a fight which began in 2014 and lasted three years. Again, they hoped for Western support when they held a vote for independence in Iraq once the fighting ended. Once again, this support did not materialise, despite the many years the Kurds had endeavoured to help the Western allies in Iraq.



Since 2014, the Kurds have also helped Syria in its war against IS. When IS launched an attack on Kurdish towns in north eastern Syria, the Kurds - fighting alongside several local Arab militias under the banner of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance and helped by US-led coalition air strikes, weapons and advisers - then steadily drove IS out of tens of thousands of square miles of territory in north-eastern Syria and established control over a large stretch of the border with Turkey.

Since the withdrawal of US troops from northern Syria, Turkey has sent its military into northeast Syria to protect its own borders and establish a 20-mile-wide safe zone to resettle 2 million of the 3.5 million Syrian refugees living in Turkey. It has meant Kurds and others living in this region have come under attack. Turkey's government believes the SDF are extensions of the PKK and are terrorist organisations that must be eliminated.

Once again, the Kurds feel that they have helped another country and have been abandoned. They feel they have not been supported and their rights have not been recognised. All their sacrifices have been to no avail and this has led to layers of disappointment, disillusionment and bitterness.

- Let's pray for Kurds to know that they have a friend in Christ.

*“The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Ps 34:18  
“I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.” Isa 57:15*

- Let’s pray that Kurds will come to know God as their refuge. *“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.” Ps 9:9*
- Pray for a complete change of heart for leaders in the region, so that they would protect the Kurds rather than fight against them.

**Tuesday 7th June**

### **Who are the Kurds?**

The Kurds are one of the indigenous peoples of the Mesopotamian plains and the highlands in what are now south-eastern Turkey, north-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, north-western Iran and south-western Armenia. This area is known as Kurdistan.



Their roots go back as far as the Medes and the Persians. They're actually descendants of the ancient Medes mentioned in the Bible. The Medes may have been the people from whom the wise men came. They were the people who first saw that Jesus was Messiah and took gold to worship at His feet.

Today, between 25 and 35 million Kurds live in Kurdistan. They make up the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East, but they have never obtained a permanent nation state. They are the largest people group in the world without a state of their own, but form a distinctive community, united through race, culture and language, even though they have no standard dialect. They dream of a homeland of their own one day.

Today it is estimated that 15 - 20 million Kurds live in Turkey, 2 - 3 million in Syria, 8 – 8.5 million in Iraq, 10 - 12 million in Iran and about 2,000 in Armenia. Other Kurds are spread far and wide, but are mainly concentrated in Germany, England, Sweden and the USA.

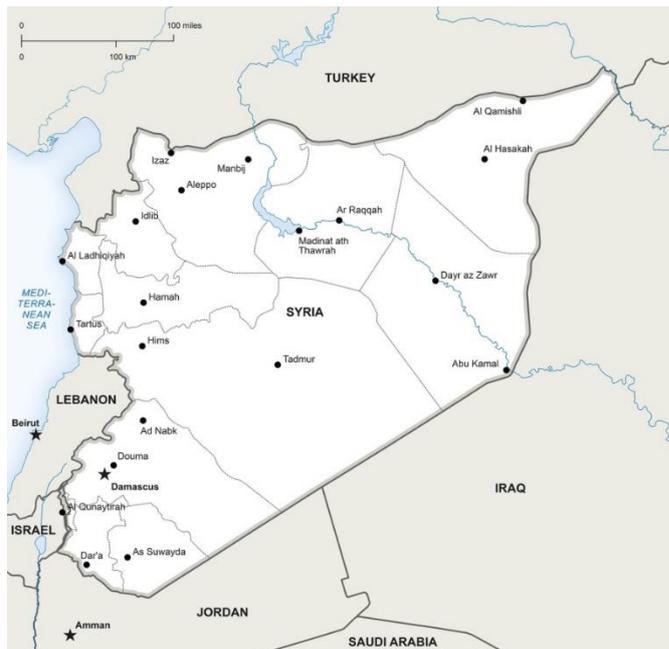
- Let's pray for the Kurdish people who need to know the peace, love and security that can only be found through a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Pray for the thousands of small Kurdish communities that have no gospel witness; that God will raise up believers in each one.
- Let's pray that one day the Kurds will be able to live peacefully in a land they can call their own.

Sources: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29702440>  
<https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/israel/2019/october/who-is-turkey-attacking-and-why-this-will-help-you-understand-the-kurds-and-the-people-of-northeast-syria>

**Wednesday 8th June**

### The situation for Kurds in Syria and Turkey

Kurds make up between 7% and 10% of Syria's population. Before the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad began in 2011 most lived in the cities of Damascus and Aleppo and in three northern areas around Kobane in the centre, Afrin in the west, and Al Qamishli in the east.



Syria's Kurds have long been suppressed and denied basic rights. Some 300,000 have been denied citizenship since the 1960s and Kurdish land has been confiscated and redistributed to Arabs in an attempt to 'Arabise' Kurdish regions.

There is deep-seated hostility between the Turkish state and the country's Kurds, who constitute 15% to 20% of the population.

Kurds received harsh treatment at the hands of the Turkish authorities for generations. In response to uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s, many Kurds were resettled, Kurdish names and costumes were banned, the use of the Kurdish

language was restricted, and even the existence of a Kurdish ethnic identity was denied, with people designated 'Mountain Turks'.

In 1978, Abdullah Ocalan established the PKK, which called for an independent state within Turkey. They are seen as a terrorist organisation by the Turkish government. Six years later the group began an armed struggle, to try and end oppression and gain independence. Tens of thousands died on both sides during the long conflict between Kurds and Turks. There was a ceasefire in 2013, but the war in Syria ended that and conflict restarted and escalated.

Since then, more than 40,000 people have been killed and hundreds of thousands displaced.

- Let's pray for Kurds to be set free from all oppression and fear.
- Pray for Kurds to find their true home in Jesus Christ.  
*"but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."* John 4:14
- Please pray for protection for Kurdish believers and for their testimony to draw many into the Kingdom of God.

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June**

### **Beliefs**

The majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims but there is a great diversity of religious tradition and affiliation in Kurdistan. There are a significant minority of Kurds who are Shia Muslim and who follow mystical practices and rites. At one time, Kurdistan was a defender of Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest religions founded in Iran 3,500 years ago. Centuries later, Christianity flourished among them. Today, there are also unique minority religions like Yazidi and Ahl-i-Haqq.

The Kurds' cultural identity is that of being Muslim because they were born in the Middle East. Since the rise of IS, this identity has been dramatically weakened. The Kurds have listened to the sermons preached by this group in the name of Islam and want to distance themselves from it. They have begun to question what Islam is about and are now more open and willing to listen to the gospel message.

On the Pray for the Kurds website, they say that spiritually the Kurds have been uniquely placed by God to have a huge impact for His Kingdom in the Middle East. We also know that there are churches of Kurdish followers of Christ in Iraq and Syria.

- Pray that a revival amongst the Kurds would not only change the Kurdish people and their future, but surrounding people groups as well across the Middle East.
- Let's pray for the Kurds to come to know God and have a true relationship with Him, not merely a change of religious belief.
- Thank God that traditional Muslim background fellowships are growing in larger cities in Kurdistan. Let's pray for rapid growth in those coming to faith and Muslim background leaders to work together in unity to promote God's Kingdom.

Source of some material: <https://prayforkurds.com/>

**Friday 10th June**

**Church and Kurdish believers**

Today it is quite difficult to know the status of the church in Kurdistan, when it is spread across such a diverse land. In Iran, where persecution has been intense, believers among the Kurds have only met in house churches and their number is largely unknown. In Iraq, it looked as if there was an explosion of church growth in the early 2000s, only to find that much of that faded away a decade later. Iraqi Kurdistan does boast one of the first Middle Eastern church buildings for Muslim background believers, the Kurdzman Church. In Turkey, small groups exist but currently there are no known groups of believers that regularly worship in Kurmanji (a Kurdish language). In Syria, many have come to faith in the last few years.

Clearly much work remains to reach people in every part of Kurdistan.

Join in the worship song, I Lift My Eyes Up, and let's sing this out for the Kurdish people:

<https://youtu.be/L0p7xbk9P2I>

- Ask God to strengthen, encourage and protect the small number of Kurds who are believers.
- The political situation in Kurdistan means information about the progress of the church is limited. However, the gospel is being proclaimed and there are believers! Let's pray and lift up the church and its leaders and ask for great encouragement and endurance.
- Let's pray that Muslim background believers are led by the Holy Spirit to those whose hearts are receptive to the gospel message.
- Let's pray for this region to be transformed as Kurdish background believers change the spiritual atmosphere and for them to be seen as a true blessing to Muslims around them.

Source: <https://prayforkurds.com/>

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June**

**Declaring God's word over the Kurdish people**



A popular Kurdish proverb says, "The Kurds have no friends but the mountains." But why? Why have the Kurds been hated and oppressed for so long and by so many? The answer is most likely found in recent history. In 1916, European powers drew up the Sykes- Picot Agreement, which effectively partitioned the Kurds into Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran without any land of their own. Over the last 100 years, their proud resolve and struggle for

independence has been met time and again with fierce brutality and oppression. When the Kurdish people have fought for self-determination, the ruling powers around them have often forced them back into the Zagros mountains, their sole refuge in times of trouble.

For our final day of prayer for the Kurdish people, let's declare God's word over them from Psalm 121

1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains — where does my help come from?

2 My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

3 He will not let your foot slip [Kurdistan] — he who watches over you will not slumber;

4 indeed, he who watches over Israel [Kurdistan] will neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The Lord watches over you [Kurdistan] — the Lord is your shade at your right hand;

6 the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

7 The Lord will keep you from all harm — he will watch over your life;

8 the Lord will watch over your coming and going [Kurdistan] both now and forevermore.

Source: <https://prayforkurds.com/>