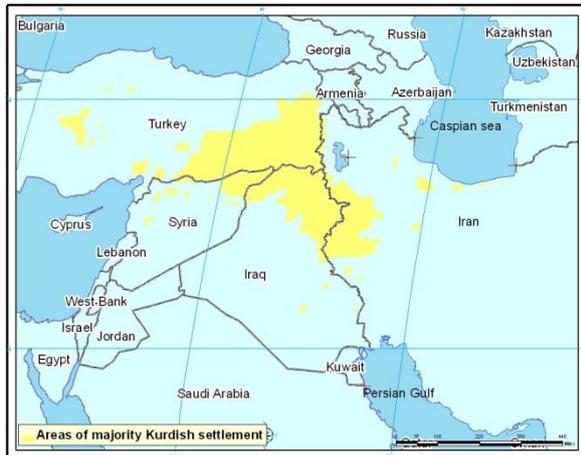


## Monday 3rd September

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 and north-western Iran, commonly known as Kurdistan.

They form a distinctive community, united through race, culture and language, even though they have no standard dialect.



In the early 20th century, many Kurds began to consider the creation of a homeland. After World War One and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the victorious Western allies made provision for a Kurdish state in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres. The nations of Iraq, Syria and Kuwait were formed, but not a Kurdish nation. This was largely because Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq refused to recognise Kurdish independence and when the Treaty of Lausanne, which set the boundaries of modern Turkey was signed three years later, there was no provision for a Kurdish state and this left Kurds with minority

status in their respective countries.

Since then, any move by Kurds to set up an independent state has been quashed.

Today it is estimated that 15 - 20 million Kurds live in Turkey, 3 - 3.6 million in Syria, 8 - 8.5 million in Iraq and 10 -12 million in Iran. Other Kurds are spread far and wide, but are mainly concentrated in Germany, England, Sweden and the USA.

You can watch a 3-minute video clip about the Kurds here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uv5-q\\_9fpro](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uv5-q_9fpro)

- Let's pray for the Kurds 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.

## Tuesday 4th September

### Kurds in Iraq

A popular Kurdish proverb says: 'The Kurds have no friends but the mountains.' Over the last 100 years, when the Kurdish people have fought for self-determination, the ruling powers around them have often forced them back into the Zagros Mountains, an extensive mountain range in Iran, Iraq and south-eastern Turkey. This has been their refuge in times of trouble.

Michael James lives in the Kurdish region of Iraq and shares the following story:



“The Kurds feel they are just 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 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 have 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 last September after the fight ended. Once again, this support did not materialise.

For many years the Kurds have endeavoured to help Iraq. They feel they have not been supported and their rights have not been implemented. All their sacrifice was to no avail and 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*
- Let’s pray for Iraq 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 of some material: <https://prayforkurds.com/>

### **Wednesday 5th September**

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 and centuries later, Christianity flourished among them. Today, unique minority religions like Yazidi and Ahl-i-Haqq continue.

Michael James, a worker living in the Kurdish region of Iraq, shares the following: “The Kurds’ cultural identity is that of being Muslim because they were born in the Middle East. Since the rise of ISIS, or Daesh as this group is often referred to in the Middle East, 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 their website, Pray for the Kurds, they say that spiritually the Kurds have been uniquely placed by God to have a huge impact for His Kingdom in 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 Iraq. Let’s pray for rapid growth in those coming to faith and Muslim background leaders working together in unity to promote God’s Kingdom.
- Pray that a revival amongst the Kurds would not only change the Kurdish people and their future, but surrounding people groups as well.

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

### **Thursday 6th September**

Many historians believe that the Kurds are descendants of the Medes, an ancient Iranian people, mentioned in the Bible. The Lord used the Medes to exact his revenge on the Babylonians (Jer. 51:11), the Israelites were exiled to the towns of the Medes (2 Kings 17:6), and under the authority of the Medes, the Jews were able to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and the city. In Acts 2:9, Medes were present for the preaching at Pentecost.

Many historians believe that the Magi who visited Jesus in Matthew 2 were spiritual leaders of the Medes/Persians. The Euphrates and Tigris rivers are in Kurdistan which may have been in the Garden of Eden, as are the mountains of Ararat (Noah’s Ark), and the supposed tombs of Esther, Mordecai and the prophet Nahum.

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, the Kurds have only met in house churches and the number of believers 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 of 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). Kurds who follow Jesus can be found in Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran, but their numbers are few.

Much work remains to reach people in every part of Kurdistan.

- Ask God to strengthen, encourage and protect the small number of Kurds who are believers.
- The political situation in Iran means information about the progress of the church is limited. However, the gospel is being proclaimed in Iranian Kurdistan and there are believers! Let's pray and lift up these faithful few.
- Let's pray that Muslim background believers are led by the Holy Spirit to those whose hearts are receptive to the gospel message.

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

### **Friday 7th September**

The Kurdish languages are a part of the Indo-European branch of languages and are closely related to Farsi and other Persian languages. Most scholars classify at least three distinct Kurdish languages: Kurmanji (also called Behdini in Iraq), Sorani, and Kermanshahi, (also called Southern Kurdish). In fact, many Kurds from one part of Kurdistan cannot understand Kurds from another area. Within each of these languages, there are also numerous dialects and accents. Zaza and Hawrami are examples of two very distinct dialects in Kurdistan. In addition, most Kurds are at least bilingual and can speak the trade languages of their areas such as Arabic, Farsi and Turkish.

At the present time, the two largest Kurdish languages, Kurmanji and Sorani have completed and printed New Testaments. Both also have draft copies of the Old Testament, but revision and printing needs to be finished. In Behdini and Kermanshahi, only the book of Luke has been completed. There are no known portions of Scripture in Zaza or Hawrami.

While the completion of the Scriptures has been slow, there is quite a lot of Christian media in the two main Kurdish languages, especially Sorani. The Jesus Film, Christian books, recorded worship music and Bible stories, Bible studies, videos for gospel presentation (The Prophet's Story), audio recordings of the New Testament, and even recorded Bible teaching, have been translated into Sorani and Kurmanji. However, little resources have been developed for the less-spoken languages and dialects such as Zaza, Hawrami, Behdini and Kermanshahi.

- Praise the Lord for the faithful men and women who have poured their lives into Scripture translation for the Kurdish people. Let's pray for the completion of the scriptures in all Kurd languages.
- Let's pray for increased ways of reaching all Kurd people with the good news, in whatever form, taking advantage of the internet and social media.
- Pray for new and creative strategies to reach large urban centres. May God give gospel workers and local believers fresh ideas for outreach!

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

## Saturday 8th September



The Kurds are a peaceful and unhurried people and you can often find them relaxing with a cup of tea and enjoying good conversation and community. Most social life revolves around the family and most families are very large. Kurdish people often identify themselves by their tribe and usually only marry within their tribes. In the cities, many families own small shops or work in government jobs. In the villages, most Kurds are farmers or shepherds, some living a semi-nomadic life with temporary homes

in both the mountains and lowlands.

Today, let's praise God and lift up the Kurdish people and pray that one day they too will sing "I could sing of your love forever": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeCwwaciAA8>

- Pray for Kurds to find the river of the Holy Spirit that overflows with love for them.
- 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

We thank CryOut for promoting prayer for the Kurds and for promoting the website 'Pray for the Kurds' from which material has been used for this prayer guide.