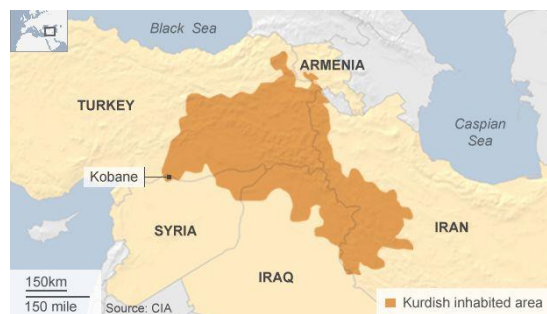


MBoB Handout July 2024 – Kurdish people

Last year John L visited St Peter's church and shared with us his sense of calling to people in the M.E. This month we were able to watch a video interview with him. Part of what he talked about was about his recent visit to work among Kurdish refugees in a neighbouring country. We therefore thought it would be helpful for us to focus on the needs of Kurdish people – who are considered to be the largest stateless group of people in the world. Estimates indicate the Kurdish population around the world as being between 35-45 million.



Kurds – Where do they come from?

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 small numbers in south-western Armenia. After World War One and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, there had been hopes for the provision of a Kurdistan, but this never came to be when the western alliance agreed to the present boundaries of Turkey. They are now the worlds largest stateless people group.

There is deep-seated hostility between the Turkish state and the country's Kurds, who constitute 15% to 20% of the population. Kurds make up an estimated 15% to 20% of Iraq's population. They have historically enjoyed more national rights than Kurds living in neighbouring states, but also faced brutal repression. Kurds form a large minority in Iran with a population of around 10 million and are seen as a threat. In Syria, they form the largest minority with around 2.5 million – around 10% of the population. The Syrian government has routinely discriminated against and harassed their Kurdish population.

Faith and the Kurdish people.

History reveals that by the 5th century, the majority of Kurdish people became Christians. In the 7th century, however, Islam came to the region through the Arab conquests. Most Kurds converted and today, the majority of Kurdish people are still Muslims.

Iraq. The number of Kurdish believers continues to grow. Leaving Islam can have dangerous consequences, but many are coming to faith and have a passion for winning others as well. The Church is still young and small, and it faces not only growing pains from within but also pressures from without.

Turkey There is the emergence of a Kurdish expression of the Church. In mixed areas, most Kurds integrate into Turkish fellowships, in itself an answer to prayer. Pray for all those seeking openings for reaching them - for the effective use of the JESUS film and other Kurdish literature. The Bible in Kurmanji was completed recently.

Syria The Kurds of the north and northwest are more receptive than most Arabs. Due to the politically sensitive nature of the Kurdish issue, it is generally difficult to engage them. Some are Orthodox Christian, others Yezidis and Shi'a, but most are Sunni Muslim.

Iran Growing numbers of Iranians, including Kurds, are choosing to follow Christ.

Kurdish diaspora. There are Kurdish refugees in UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, Belgium and other countries. Some have come to faith as a result of outreach and welcome by the church.

Summary of John's trip John L. has recently been on a journey to a refugee camp in a neighbouring country where he and 3 other doctors were holding a weeklong clinic for local people where they were able to offer treatment and prayer to over 100 patients daily, mostly children. He highlights the immense challenge for parents caring for disabled children in the refugee camp and his own sadness of seeing kids with chronic and sometimes life limiting condition who would receive much better care elsewhere.

Prayer points:

- Peace and protection for Kurdish people who are vulnerable to discrimination and abuse.
- That the followers of Jesus may be confident in their faith and be encouraged in their fellowships.
- For wisdom for Christians working among Kurds, in their words and especially through the compassionate actions.