



## Quick Facts

**Population:** 30,000,000

Turkey: 15,000,000

Iran: 6,000,000

Iraq: 6,000,000

Syria: 1,000,000

**Religion:** Muslim (Sunni, Shia)

**Believers:** 0.0028%

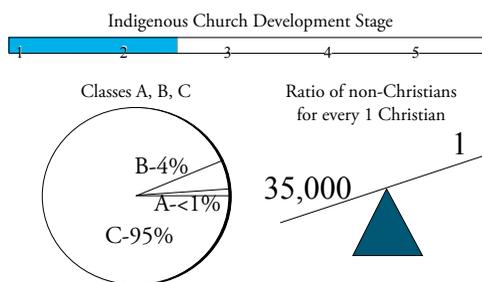
**Scriptures:** NT, OT

**Ministry Tools:** JRGT

**Church Status:** 2

**Mission Status:** 2

**MS Subgroups:** 25+



Class A- Are members of a Culturally Relevant Church  
 Class B- Have close access to a CRC, but have not yet joined  
 Class C- Have no reasonable or close access to a CRC

**Identity:** The Kurds are closely related to the Iranian people-cluster. Linguistic, tribal and religious differences among them have kept the Kurds from uniting into a nation-state. Throughout history, the Turks, Arabs and Persians have successfully divided and conquered Kurdistan, resulting in four major Kurdish minority populations.

**Lifestyle:** Living primarily in mountainous regions (Anti-Taurus and Zagros ranges), the Kurds have adapted well to their environment using terracing and irrigation systems to grow grain crops. Kurdistan is well watered and fertile, creating an independent self-sustaining economic system. However, the desire for autonomy has led to civil wars in Iraq, Iran and Turkey, resulting in millions of refugees.

**Customs:** Villages typically have at least one large building which serves as the social hall for men and the residence of the tribal leader. Antici-

patory inheritance, (where a son will receive a share of the herd when setting up his new home), is practiced among some tribes. Sons traditionally set up their homes near the residences of their father and brothers, forming a *maballe* (extended family village ward).

**Religion:** The Kurds are divided between Sunni factions in Turkey and Iraq, and Shia factions in Iran. Religious leaders come from two sources—internship with a well-established *shaikh* (Muslim high-cleric) and from a community called Sadaat, which claims descent from Muhammad. Many Sunni communities have followers of Sufi orders, which are mystical and missionary communities seeking a more experiential relationship with God.

**Christian Outreach:** Ministry among the Kurds in Iran and Turkey has been minimal, and these populations are largely neglected and unevangelized. Among the Kurdish diaspora in Europe

and the United States, breakthroughs are beginning and fellowships forming. In Iraq the Kurdish church has seen spectacular progress and momentum is building towards a strong indigenous discipleship movement.

## How to Pray:

✞ Praise God for those faithful missionaries who labored in Iraq despite the dangers over the last decade. Pray that the fruit of their labor will result in a church-planting movement.

✞ Ask God to raise up Kurdish diaspora believers to become missionaries to the unevangelized Turkish and Iranian Kurds.

✞ Pray for God's continued blessing on the Kurdish church in Iraq, that there would be unity of purpose, and favorable conditions for the spread of the gospel.

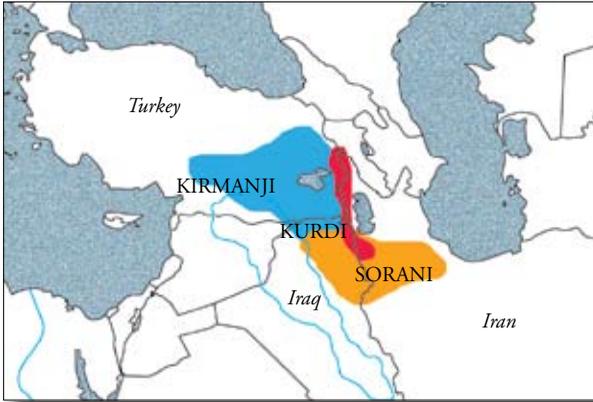
✞ Pray for God's protection over the foreign missionary personnel working in this volatile region, and that their presence would not jeopardize the indigenous Kurdish church or hinder its development.

✞ Praise God for the effectiveness of the Jesus film in Kurdish dialects which has led many to faith!

**Every year 250,000 Kurds die without Christ.**

# Kurd (cont.)

## KURDISH DIALECTS



Country	Population	%
<i>N. Kurdish (Kirmanji)</i>	15,000,000	50%
Turkey	9,000,000	30%
Iraq	2,800,000	9.3%
Syria	1,000,000	3.3%
<i>Cent. Kurdish (Kurdi)</i>	3,750,000	12.5%
Iran	3,250,000	10.8%
Iraq	500,000	1.6%
<i>S. Kurdish (Sorani)</i>	5,500,000	18.3%
Iran	3,000,000	10%
Iraq	2,500,000	8.3%

### TURKEY

Kurds in Turkey are estimated to represent about 20% of the country's population. As many as five million may now speak Turkish as their mother-tongue. The rest speak various dialects of Northern Kurdish, known as Kirmanji. Among those who speak Kurdish there is vigorous resistance to adopting the Turkish language, despite pressure from the government to do so. Less than 20% of Kurdish speakers are literate in Turkish. From 1984 to 1999 a Kurdish rebel movement known as the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan) launched major rebel offensives against the Turkish military. The government responded with brutal force, destroying at least 3,000 villages and massacring thousands of innocent civilians. Turkey's desire to enter the EU has resulted in a relaxation of its policies towards the Kurds. It is no longer illegal to use the Kurdish language, though radio broadcasts in Kurdish are limited to one hour a day. The limited use of Kurdish in private schools is also gaining gradual acceptance.

### IRAN

Iranian Kurds make up around 7% of the population. They live primarily in the northwestern portion of the country, with the exception of around 700,000 that were deported in the 17th century to Khorasan in Eastern Iran. Though isolated from the majority Kurdish population these Kurds have continued to maintain a distinct culture and continue to speak the Kirmanji dialect. More so than any other minority population in Iran, the Kurds have resisted efforts by the government to assimilate them. In 1979 Khomeini declared a holy war against them, resulting in the deaths of 10,000 innocent Kurdish civilians.

### IRAQ

The Kurds constitute between 19 to 23 percent of Iraq's population. The majority speak Southern Kurdish, also known as Sorani, which includes 10 major dialects. The remaining 2.5 million speak Northern or Central Kurdish. The Kurds of Iraq have been demanding autonomy from the Iraqi government since the early 1960s. Though they were promised autonomy by 1974, the discovery of oil in their region changed those plans. In 1974, Iran and Iraq signed the Algiers Pact, which would cut off supplies to the Kurds from Iran. The Iraqi government then began a series of offensives against them, driving out Kurdish populations in oil-rich areas and replacing the population with Arabs. In the 1980s, during the Iran-Iraq war, the Kurds launched an offensive against the Iraqi regime, resulting in strong retaliation and ethnic cleansing of over 100,000 Kurds, along with mass deportation.

### SYRIA

Syrian Kurds account for around 10% of the country's population, and are the nation's largest minority group. As in other countries, Syrian Kurds have been greatly mistreated. Their language has been banned from public use, and they are not permitted to give their children Kurdish names. It is also illegal for them to set up their own private schools, or possess books and materials written in Kurdish. Hundreds of thousands have been denied citizenship, and those that are citizens are banned from forming any political parties.