

Kurdish immigrant's opinions on current Turkish politics and their Political Behavior

A Brief Report of the Fieldwork of the “Yekmale.V.”
Turkish-Kurdish Community in Berlin

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This report is about the field research conducted in Berlin, Germany from the 19th to 29th of March during the New Year, Newroz, a Kurdish festival celebrated every year, aimed to investigate the Kurdish people's view of the Erdogan regime and its Kurdish policies in Turkey, as well as the current situation of the Kurdish community in Germany. The report is constituted of three parts: 1) activities of each



Memorials related to the Ukrainian War in front of Brandenburg Gate. Taken on March 22nd, 2023

day, 2) findings, and 3) Future prospects.

It was inevitable to notice the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War in various aspects: housing prices got more than doubled in the previous couple of years and were placed various commemorative items related to the conflict are seen everywhere, for example, peace signs and flowers were placed in front of the Brandenburg Gate, reminding of the dangers of war and the value of peace.

The first research visit was conducted at an event that aimed to gather people together through hip-hop and Kurdish culture. Most of the participants were refugees from Turkey and Syria, mainly children of Kurdish refugees. The staff was also the ones with a Kurdish background.

The event staff showed a willingness to communicate with me attentively during and after the event. Through this, the reporter had the opportunity to converse with Kurdish people and those interested in Kurdish culture.

A's parents have come from Greece and Turkey, two countries that have always been at odds. Currently, A works as a dance performance artist and lived in Turkey until

ten, before the fall of the Berlin Wall. A moved to Germany and started life in Germany since then. A doesn't have too much opinion about the Erdogan regime in Turkey, but A actively organizes and participates in various Kurdish cultural activities across all age groups, and shows great dedication to promoting Kurdish culture.

Another informant called B was born in Germany. B's parents had come from the northern part of Kurdistan, a place close to the Turkey-Syria border. When B grows up, B chose German citizenship. B does not positively evaluate the Erdogan government's policy of easing tensions with the Kurdish people.

Informant C's companion was Kurdish. They have only been in Germany for five months, and when I asked if they wanted to return to Turkey, C replied that they have ambitious plans for the next five years and are focused on developing their lives in Germany. They hold a very negative attitude towards Erdogan's Kurdish policies from about 2009 to 2015, describing them as "political tools". They all have contact with their families in Turkey without exception. They expressed dissatisfaction and skepticism towards the Erdogan regime's Kurdish policies and the series of relaxations towards the Kurdish people since 2009, stating that it had not brought enough tangible positive impact on the lives of the local Kurdish people. Moreover, it was said that the oppression of Kurds was already widespread in Turkey even before



Outside the office building of the Kurdish organization association. Taken on March 24th, 2023

the Erdogan regime, and it is common for Kurds who publicly speak Kurdish to face discrimination from people around their surroundings.

The Kurdish people's national sentiment seemed to have become even stronger under continuous oppression, and they have become more urgent to prove their identity and the fact of their existence as Kurdish.

Another event the author attended was in a different location, far from the city center of Berlin, which was held in a Turkish immigrant area. The graffiti on the walls also became denser and more varied, including those with the letters 'PKK'. The event was organized to introduce the Kurdish people's survival and political participation status in northern Kurdistan. The promotional brochures at the venue were written in German, Kurdish, Turkish, and Arabic. After the event, the author conducted a simple verbal survey of the



Publications related to the Kurds' homeland.
Taken on March 24th, 2023

participants, and they expressed a high level of concern about domestic politics in Turkey, especially regarding the Kurdish political parties. Informants claimed that they would participate in the upcoming May elections to express their negative attitude toward the Erdogan regime.

Discrimination and oppression aim to compress and seize the living space, for the Kurdish people, as a large oppressed and neglected group in the middle east, it seems difficult to gain self-identity and achieve a better and more decent life in their homeland. The Kurdish language has been forbidden to use normally in Turkey, and to confirm such a strong sentiment toward their own language, the author witnessed that they started singing Kurdish songs in tears at the end of this event, expressing their strong sentiments toward their homeland.

The Kurdish informants of this research were in their 20s or 40s, many of them were

still working hard for a better life but were constantly reminded of their status as a minority. Kurds have a larger population and a wider geographical area, but their identity is relatively invisible often. They may be seen as Middle Easterners, Turks, Syrians, Iranians, and Iraqis, but not as Kurds. Such neglect may fuel deeper nationalistic sentiments and bring greater uncertainty and conflict to the Middle East and Europe. The Kurdish issue has not only become an important part of the Middle East problem in recent years but has also deeply influenced the relationship between the Middle East and Europe. Instead of oppression and persecution, acknowledging the genuine needs of each ethnic group, and engaging in patient communication and dialogue, may enhance a better environment to discuss the Middle East conflict and the refugee crisis or other issues in Europe.

Previous studies on Kurds show the views of nationalism of Kurdish and refugees' social integration policies in host countries (Europe), and the politics of Kurds in Turkey included the Kurdish peace process. For instance, William has focused on the construction of Turkish citizenship among minorities and the activities of Kurdish nationalist organizations and political parties and has discussed the politics and living environment of the Kurdish people (William, Gourlay. 2020. *The Kurds in Erdogan's Turkey: Balancing Identity, Resistance, and Citizenship*. Edinburgh University Press Ltd.). The Kurds' support for the Kurdish areas in the Middle East is also



Streets near the rally organized by Kurdish groups. Taken on March 27th, 2023

insufficiently explained about the ties.

In future research, the author will continue to combine the regional studies approach and international relations theory to analyze the data collected from the fieldwork and continue researching the Kurdish issue. Further, it is planned to conduct fieldwork by conducting other cities in Germany and Other countries in Europe based on regional research methods to develop research on Kurdish cultural and political activities in Europe. Considering that the political environment of the Kurds after the election in Turkey in 2023 might be different from the current one, the author will also investigate the changes in the political environment in Turkey and the northern Kurdistan of the real state of the political movement.

Based on empirical observation, this study will continue to light on Kurdish immigrants in Germany, who lives in multinational networks

that connect the middle east and Europe. The issue of Kurdish immigrants emerges at the intersection of nationalism, minority migration, and military violence. The research findings will continue the debate on world peace, refugee issues, developments of democracy, and regional social stability.

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