

Antioch Christian Fellowship

The Northern Kurd of Iraq

Unreached People Prayer Profile for May & June, 2003



The 1.3 million Northern Kurd (Kurmanji speakers) of [Iraq](#) live primarily along the northeastern border of Iraq, touching Iran. However, some have fled further north to escape the severe persecution of Saddam Hussein and the devastation of the Gulf War. Many live as refugees in the "safe zone" created after the war.

The Northern Kurd are actually part of a much greater Kurd population. They are made up of a number of clans, tribes, and tribal confederations, many of which have been in existence for thousands of years. This large people group shares several important and common ties. Not only do they speak closely related languages, but they also share a common culture, geographical homeland, and sense of identity. Unfortunately, they share many common problems as well. Water is scarce, and they are constantly threatened by such diseases as trachoma, tuberculosis, and malaria.

What are their lives like?

The Northern Kurd of Iraq make their living in much the same way as their relatives in Turkey and Iran, by farming and raising cattle and goats. Their homeland is also one of Iraq's major oil producing regions. Prior to the Gulf War, many of them lived in cities and worked in the oil industry.

The Northern Kurd are noted for their elaborate national costumes. The men's costumes consist of baggy, colored trousers and plain shirts with huge sleeves split at the wrist and tied at the elbow. Brightly colored vests and sashes are also worn. Women usually wear heavy clothing that is embroidered with vivid colors. Today, many rural Kurds have abandoned their native costumes for western style dress.

The most important Kurdish national festival is the New Year celebration which is held on March 21st. This long ceremony may continue for a week or more. Many specific foods and condiments are prepared in advance. Special flowers are grown for the occasion and branches covered with fresh buds are cut and made to adorn the feast. New clothes are worn, and some old pottery is broken for good luck. People visit each other's homes, and old feuds and misunderstandings are reconciled. Gifts are given by seniors to their juniors in age, and high ranking social figures are paid visits and brought gifts.

What are their beliefs?

Nearly all Kurds are Muslims, most being [Shafiite Sunnis](#). They first embraced Islam after the Arab conquests of the seventh century. They look to Islam as a basis for social justice. However, despite being predominantly Sunnis, religion has created deep rifts among the Kurds. These differences also have prejudicial overtones towards the lower class. Many of the dispossessed Kurd minorities have become associated with the secret and unorthodox sects of Islam--the most fervently rebellious people in Kurd society.

What are their needs?

The Northern Kurd have endured much suffering in recent years. Their massive exodus from Iraq brought international attention to their situation as never before. As victims of the region's recent political developments, they have suffered no less than any other oppressed people group since World War II. The Iraqi secret police have often poisoned many of their Kurdish opponents both at home and abroad. Some have even been poisoned in refugee camps. The Kurds need to know that true refuge and safety can only be found in Jesus Christ.

Poor health conditions and the scarcity of water are also problems faced by the Northern Kurd. Humanitarian aid workers and medical teams are needed to live and work among them.

Most importantly, the Northern Kurd are trapped in the bondage of Islam. Although there are 10 missions agencies targeting them, there are still less than 1,000 known believers living among them. The New Testament has been translated into their language; however, there are no Christian radio or television broadcasts available.

Prayer Points

- Ask God to send Christian medical teams and humanitarian aid workers to live among the Northern Kurd.
- Pray that God will supply clean water for the people of Iraq.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will give the missions agencies strategies for reaching these Muslims with the Gospel.
- Ask God to use the small number of Northern Kurd believers as a clear Gospel witness to their own people.
- Pray that God will raise up qualified linguists to complete translation of the Bible into Kurmanji.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften their hearts towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- Pray that God will raise up a strong local church among the Northern Kurd by the year 2000.

Kurdish People Group Information:

Country:	Iraq
Language Spoken:	Kermanji (Kurmanji)
Population of People in this Country:	1,457,000
Population of Language Speakers in the World:	6,840,300
Language Code:	KUR00
% Christians of this People in this Country:	0%
# of Evangelicals of this People in this Country:	0
% Evangelicals of this People in this Country:	0%
Latitude, Longitude:	37.0015, 44.5154
GMI Map Code:	KUR-IRQ-EPY
Affinity Block Name:	Indo-Iranians of SW Asia
People Cluster:	Kurd
Race Code:	CNT24c
1995 Beginning Joshua Project List:	Yes
Active Original Joshua Project List:	Yes

Additional People Group Information:

Complete Bible:	No
New Testament:	1872
Bible Portions:	1856
Jesus Film:	Yes
Christian Radio Broadcast:	HIADV, TWR
Audio Recording of Gospel:	Yes