



## Resolution 1519 (2006)<sup>1</sup>

# The cultural situation of the Kurds

### Parliamentary Assembly

1. Further to its reports on Gypsies in Europe ([Doc. 6733](#), 1993), on Yiddish culture ([Doc. 7489](#), 1996), on the Aromanians ([Doc. 7728](#), 1997), on endangered Uralic minority cultures ([Doc. 8126](#), 1998) and on the Csango minority culture in Romania ([Doc. 9078](#), 2001), the Parliamentary Assembly now wishes to draw attention to the cultural situation of the Kurds.
2. The Assembly dealt with other issues related to the Kurds in its reports on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Turkey ([Doc. 9120](#), 2001 and [Doc. 10111](#), 2004), and on the humanitarian situation of the displaced Kurdish population in Turkey ([Doc. 9391](#), 2002).
3. The question of precisely where the Kurds come from remains an enigma. For the purpose of this resolution, the Kurds are an ethnic group whose mother tongue is Kurdish. They come primarily from the Zagros-Taurus mountain ranges, the mountainous area where Turkey, Iran and Iraq meet.
4. The number of Kurds is not known as none of the countries where they mainly live (namely Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey) include ethnicity in their population censuses. Estimates range from 25 to 30 million, making them one of the largest “stateless nations” in the world.
5. Kurds are speakers of Kurdish, a member of the north-western subdivision of the Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages. It is fundamentally different from Arabic, a Semitic language, and Turkish, an Altaic language. Modern Kurdish divides into several major groups, the largest of which being the Kurmânji group. These are supplemented by scores of sub-dialects.
6. The situation of the Kurds varies considerably between the different countries where they live. In Iraq, some 5 million Kurds have been enjoying a status of near independence since the 1991 Gulf War. In Iran, Kurds have no rights other than cultural: music and folklore but no education. In Syria, they have no rights at all and even their music is forbidden.
7. For many decades the Kurds were not recognised by the Turkish authorities. In 2004, this situation changed when programmes in Kurdish dialects were broadcast on Turkish national television and Kurdish language courses were authorised. Books, records and concerts in Kurdish are no longer forbidden. Two private regional television channels and a radio station started brief Kurdish-language broadcasts for the first time on 23 March 2006.
8. Some Kurds have been associated with so-called “honour killings”, but this barbaric practice does not concern Kurds alone. It prevails in the most backward (rural) areas of the Middle East. Education and economic development go hand in hand with the decrease of such practices. Women’s associations play an important role in Iraq and Turkey. The new Turkish Penal Code eliminates any mitigating factor for “honour killings” and redefines them as premeditated homicide.
9. Many inhabitants of the whole region need to modernise their attitudes. The great majority of Kurds are aware that Europe is a positive thing and place hope in their common future either within or with Europe. They should also be aware that a country where “honour killings” are still accepted by some as a part of their

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1. Assembly debate on 4 October 2006 (28th Sitting) (see [Doc. 11006](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Lord Russell-Johnston). Text adopted by the Assembly on 4 October 2006 (28th Sitting).



“traditions” is a country which has no place in the Europe of human rights. The Assembly welcomes the legal, political and social steps taken by the Turkish Government, which it is hoped will pave the way for a sustainable change in the right direction.

10. More than one million Kurds live in western Europe and there are Kurdish cultural institutions in most European countries where a significant Kurdish population is settled. The Kurdish diaspora has also played a major political role in making known the fate of the Kurds in the various countries of origin to western public opinion.

11. The Assembly recalls other texts which it has adopted on related matters, notably [Recommendation 928 \(1981\)](#) on the educational and cultural problems of minority languages and dialects in Europe, [Recommendation 1283 \(1996\)](#) on history and the learning of history in Europe and [Recommendation 1740 \(2006\)](#) on the place of the mother tongue in school education.

12. Diversity of cultures and languages should be seen as a precious resource that enriches our European heritage and reinforces the identity of each country and individual. Assistance on the European level, and in particular from the Council of Europe, is needed to protect this particular culture.

13. The improvement of the cultural situation of Kurds is directly related to political stability in the region. Peace and stability are necessary for the improvement of the cultural situation of ethnic groups.

14. The Assembly encourages Turkey, as a Council of Europe member state, to address the “Kurdish issue” in a comprehensive manner and to take necessary measures with a view to further improving the cultural situation of Kurds in Turkey.

15. In the field of culture, the Assembly recommends that the competent Turkish authorities take the following measures:

15.1. ensure the protection of the main Kurdish languages by signing, ratifying and implementing the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages (ETS No. 148) with reference to the Kurdish languages spoken in Turkey;

15.2. consider the possibility of mother tongue education, in addition to education in the official language;

15.3. inform Kurdish parents of the different linguistic possibilities and issue instructions on how to apply for what is available;

15.4. encourage university courses on Kurdish language and literature;

15.5. recognise and support Kurdish cultural associations and engage in a dialogue with them with a view to co-operation in the protection of the Kurdish language and culture;

15.6. re-examine the administrative procedures faced by Kurds in their cultural activities;

15.7. promote access to modern mass media facilities to Kurdish speakers. Financial support should come from within the Kurdish community to enable the development of the written press, radio and television;

15.8. set up further local centres in Turkey for the promotion of Kurdish culture with a view to raising awareness of and respect for minorities.

16. The Assembly also urges the governments of Iran, Iraq and Syria to acknowledge that the Kurdish language and culture are part of their own heritage, that they are a treasure to be preserved and not a threat to be combated, and asks them to take the necessary measures in the light of the present resolution, in particular in the field of language.