

DRAFT PROGRAMME
Kurdish Studies Conference
Wednesday 29 April – Friday 1 May 2026
London School of Economics

DAY ONE
WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL 2026

10:00	Registration and Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Panel 1A – Politics from the margins in Iran
<i>Jin, Jiyan Azadî: Decolonising the 'Iranian nation'</i> Rojîn Mûkrîyan, University College Cork	
<i>From margin to metropole: Kurdish, Baluch and working-class invisibilities in the Jina Uprising</i> Armin Messager, Sciences-Po	
<i>Iran's ethnonational dynamics: Persian hegemony and intersectional struggles in the peripheries</i> Yunus Abakay, University of Exeter	
<i>Spatial politics in Kurdistan: How urban geography is weaponised against Kurds in Iran</i> Soran Mansournia, University of Groningen	
Panel 1B – Agency and belonging in Europe and beyond	
<i>Between invisibility and hypervisibility: Everyday lives and media framing of Kurdish diaspora in Japan</i> Haci Cevik, Humboldt University & Miki Nose, Institute of Developing Economies, Japan	
<i>Statelessness, borders and bureaucracies: Experiences of stateless Kurds from Syria</i> Haqqi Bahram, Linköping University	
<i>From refugee narrative to economic actor: Yezidis in Russia reimagined</i> Henriette Raddatz, Freie Universität Berlin	
<i>Heritage bridges: Kurdish contemporary art in Poland (2003-2025)</i> Joanna Bocheńska, Jagiellonian University	
<i>Making space for agency: Yezidi women in the Russian diaspora</i> Evin Bulut, Ibn Haldun University	

11:00 – 12:30 Panel 1C – Culture, migration and survivors in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Narratives of opportunity: Strengthening cultural infrastructure and international engagement in the Kurdistan Region, Iraq

Lina Abdulqadir, Independent Researcher & Arin Khorshed, Loughborough University

Out-migration from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Causes, consequences, and UK–KRG counter-smuggling responses

Amanj Ali Qadir Aljmur, Salahaddin University

Oral codes of Anfal: New perspectives from survivor narratives in the Jabary region of Garmyan

Hersh Hama Karim, University of Sulaimani

Political paradigm in the Kurdish genocide in Iraq (1987–1989)

Mansur Tayfuri, University of Paris 8

Panel 1D – The conflict in Turkey: Discrimination, disagreement and discourse

Emotional dynamics of talking to lay vs. ally Turks: Discrimination experiences and intergroup contact intentions among Kurds

Özden Melis Uluğ, University of Sussex

Tracing radical disagreement in the Kurdish conflict: Discourse, hegemony and ontological insecurity

Recep Onursal, Independent Researcher

Fifty shades of Turkishness: Conflicts and convergences in the Sarıçhane Protests

Jiyan Andic, Boğaziçi University

Everyday racism and anti-racism in Istanbul: Kurdish youth, car arson, and the Turkish flag (2005–2013)

Güllistan Yarkin, University of Hamburg



11:00 – 12:30 Panel 1E – The Kurdish underground: Fugitive epistemologies of worldmaking in Kurdistan

Fieldnotes from the underground: Queer Kurdish intimacies in the drug world

Emrah Karakuş, University of Sussex

Yurtsever's breath: The atmospheres of revolution and the politics from the below in Kurdistan

Delal Aydin, Geneva Graduate Institute

Off the sonic grounds: The Kurdish music in queer scenes

Ruken Atçeken, Independent Researcher

Flesh and soil: The trans/grounds of the Kurdish aesthetics

Heja Aksünger, Independent Researcher

Centaurea Kurdica: Spinozaic encounters with the grounded fragments of Kurdish life

Helin Karabil, Independent Researcher

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 15:00 Panel 2A – Women in Bakur: Authority, memory and resistance

Voices of mourning: The ritual authority of Zakir women in post-earthquake Gomika

Berivan Matyar, Independent Researcher

Archives of doubly disappeared women in Turkey

Hazal Özvarış, Goldsmiths, University of London

The Kurdish Women's Movement for a new positive peace: From a sociological fieldwork in Northern Kurdistan

William Persichilli, University of Cambridge & University of Messina

Women, war, and the architecture of loss: Gendered spatial politics in post-conflict Kurdish cities

Ozlem Belcim Galip, University of Sussex

13:30 – 15:00 Panel 2B – Identity, education and knowledge production

Reconstructing identity and belonging: Educational policy, cultural resistance, and minorities in the Middle East

Elhadj Moussa BenMoussa, University of East London

Loyalty from learning: Education, skills and training in the PKK and Komala

James Hewitt, University of St Andrews

Assessing minority heritage curricula in the Kurdistan Region

Muslih Irwani, American University of Iraq – Baghdad

Reflexive notes on the state of knowledge production and diversity: How have home-grown scholars studied diversity in post-2003 Iraq?

Hewa Khedir, Birmingham City Council

Panel 2C – New approaches to Kurdish philology and literature

Establishing classical Kurdish literature as a sociological field: Identity, discourse, and canon

Yashar Abdulselamoglu, Sofia University

The unspeakable in dreams: Cultural identity in Fouzieh Besharat's "Dance of Fate"

Sima Kostadinova, Sofia University

Mem û Zîn as subaltern world literature

Michiel Leezenberg, University of Amsterdam

Defending Kurdish episteme: Dengbêjî, oral tradition, and the epistemic lines of national narration

Halil İbrahim Şakar, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University

Literature, identity, and belonging: The role of children's books in Kurdish diaspora identity formation

Chenoor Zagros, University of Applied Sciences in Eindhoven



13:30 – 15:00 Panel 2D – Internationalising Kurdish struggles

Translocal communal imaginaries: Kurdish Democratic Confederalism and the Catalan Left Independence Movement
Özgür Güneş Öztürk, University of Lleida

Beyond borders and ideologies: The shifting politics of Kurdish-Palestinian solidarity and internationalisms, 1960s–present
Agit Karatas, LSE

The global Kurdish turn: How Jina Amini's state-murder internationalised the Kurdish Struggle in Rojhelat
Allan Hassaniyan, University of Exeter

Panel 2E – Ecologies of conflict, environment and resistance

The transitional justice and environmental harm nexus: The Turkish Kurdish peace
Nisan Alıcı Zeytun, University of Derby & Suanne M. Segovia-Tzompa, Centre for Natural Hazards and Disaster Science, Uppsala

River, brook, stream: Intimate and official currents of the Tigris River
Roza Kavak, Independent Researcher

Becoming Mağdur and living as a Mâcire: Narratives of displacement after the Muş Alpaslan-1 Dam
Noor Boz, Macquarie University

Death of nature – death of the movement? Necro-eco-politics and resistance in Rojava
Marcin Skupiński, University of Warsaw

15:00 – 15:30 Coffee Break

15:30 – 17:00 Conference Roundtables**Launching the Encyclopaedia of the Kurds: Vision, structure, and scholarly contribution**

Facilitator: Metin Atmaca, Social Sciences University of Ankara

Panel: Ozan Aksoy, Berklee School of Music; Serhun Al, Izmir University of Economics; Janroj Keleş, Middlesex University

Discussant: Michiel Leezenberg, University of Amsterdam

Towards building decolonial epistemic infrastructures: Strengthening and expanding the Kurdish Gender Studies Network

Facilitators: Necla Acik, LSE Middle East Centre and Hakan Sandal-Wilson, LSE

Conducting fieldwork

Facilitator: Durukan Imrie-Kuzu, LSE Middle East Centre

A conversation with Bachtyar Ali

Facilitator: Goran Baba Ali, Afsana Press

The prominent Kurdish intellectual will discuss his prolific output of fiction, poetry and literary criticism. The conversation will be interpreted by Kareem Abdulrahman and will highlight the importance of translation for Kurdish culture

DAY TWO
THURSDAY 30 APRIL 2026**09:30 – 11:00 Panel 3A – Alevi and Kurdish Studies at the crossroads: Rethinking fields and research horizons**

Chair: Ümit Çetin

Kurdish Studies and Alevism: The role of Arab Alevis
Hakan Mertcan, Independent Researcher

Collective knowledge-making in Alevi Studies: The Alevi Encyclopedia
Hayal Hanoğlu, Alevi Encyclopedia

Intersecting fields: Kurdish Alevism (Raa Haqi) at the crossroads of Alevi and Kurdish Studies
Ahmet Kerim Gultekin, Alevi Encyclopedia

Reimagining Jiara: Towards an ecofeminist understanding of human-more-than-human intra-actions in Kurdish Alevi communities
Ece Esmer Kırmacı, University of Hamburg

Panel 3B – Kurdish women navigating belonging in Europe

Kurdish Women's Movement in Germany
Sevil Çakır, Independent Researcher

Urban motherhood and social integration: The role of social infrastructure in managing everyday lives of Kurdish migrant mothers in Berlin
Bahar Çatı, Humboldt University

Performing citizenship at the edge: Kurdish migrant women navigating liminality in Switzerland
Ruşen Işık, Graduate Institute Geneva

Panel 3C – Cultural preservation

When Dengbêj and Native American tribal music preserve communal stories
Emilie Pons, University of Oregon

From home to café: Semi-public language practices and Kurdish vitality
Nasır Heval Batu, Mehmet Paso, Ekrem Koçbaşı, & Mehmet Yonat, Mardin Artuklu University

An examination of Kurdish cultural institutions in Diyarbakır following 2015
Mehmet Tayfur, University of Strasbourg

09:30 – 11:00 Panel 3D – Conceptual and theoretical approaches to Kurdish questions

Borders, banners, and bodies: The contested foundations of Kurdistan's national vision
Thoreau Redcrow, Independent Researcher

Theorising 'National Colonialism': The Kurdish case
Behnam Amini, York University

Revisiting regional security complex theory: The Kurdish question in Middle Eastern security dynamics
Ahmed Swar, Soran University

The missed opportunity of Kurdish secularism in the Iranian 1979 Islamic Revolution
Hemn Seyed, Independent Researcher

Panel 3E – Religion and identity formation

From prohibition to livestream: Ilm and digital transformation in a Kurdish borderland
Sabri Ege, University of Westminster

Negotiating religious practice: Kurdish Sunni Muslims and mosque engagement in Germany
Hevidar Isik, University of Münster

Negotiating Kurdish identity and gender: A comparative study of Alevi and Sunni young women in Germany
İrem Ceylan Uluğ, Humboldt University of Berlin & Özden Melis Uluğ, University of Sussex

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break

11:30 – 13:00 Panel 4A – Papers presented in Kurdish languages

This panel will be conducted in Sorani and Kurmancî. English translation will not be provided.

Characteristics of Kurdish Nationalism in Dildar's Poetry
Ahmed Mahmood Abdullah, Erbil Polytechnic University

Diasporic Struggles, Decolonial Visions: Empowerment and Knowledge in the Kurdish Women's Movement
Münevver Azizoğlu-Bazan, University of Bremen

Dogs, Humans, Conflict, and Common Ecologies in Şemdinli from the 1990s to the Present
Riber Çelik, Galatasaray University

The Co-Presidency in Kurdish Local Governments: Level and Process of Socialization of the System (2014-2024)
Dersim Dağ, EHESS



11:30 – 13:00 Panel 4B – Kurdish women in the diaspora

Kurdish women's coping strategies in the post-migration settings
Dilan Salik, Université de Paris Cité

Navigating the 'Patriarchal Trifecta': Kurdish women's agency and daily struggles in the United Kingdom
Shilan Fuad Hussein, Institute of Domestic Violence, Religion and Migration

Trans-local Kurdish family and diverse forms of activism
Karol Kaczorowski, Cracow University of Economics

Panel 4C – Statelessness and resilience in Rojava

Statelessness in Rojava: Reassessing human rights through the Kurdish statelessness experience
Merve Fırat, Middle East Technical University

Kurdish statelessness after Assad - Finally hope of resolution and justice?
Thomas McGee, European University Institute

Roots of resilience: Syrian Kurdish political culture and the making of wartime democracy in Rojava
Polat Jan, Independent Researcher

Theatre in Rojava: The theatre among ruins, between reality and ambition
Rezan Saleh, University of Oslo

Panel 4D – Counter-imagininations in Kurdish cinema

Statelessness in Kurdish cinema
Zara Masrour, Independent Researcher

On Kurdish cinema: Mapping Kurdish cinematic languages
Pshtiwan Babakr, Kashkul

Kurds in Japanese cinema: Representation, identity, and the politics of visibility in contemporary Japan
Vakkas Çolak, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

The role of dream in Kurdish-Queer memory: The frame and side paths of Kurdish-Queer childhood
Dilan Şenay Yılmaz, Eastern Mediterranean University

11:30 – 13:00 Panel 4E – Survival, memorialisation and surveillance in Turkey

Security and everyday life in Dersim: State surveillance as a claim to ownership

Burcu Buğu, University of California

The significance and potential of memorialising past atrocities: How and what to remember in the new peace process in Turkey

Esin Gülsen, Goethe University

Survival, solidarity, carcerality: Notes from İstanbul on the academy and the deportation centre

Erkan Gürsel, University of Cambridge

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 Panel 5A – Translation and cultural representation

Decentring Sorani Kurdish in Iraq: The rise of Bahdinani in translation

Yaser Ali, University of Duhok

Voice and power in Kurdish literary translation

Shene Mohammed, American University of Iraq, Sulaimani

The potentials and limitations of cultural institutions in representing politically marginalised groups: The Kurdistan Region of Iraq as a case study

Sarwar Fatih, Kashkul

Perceiving Kurdish-accented Turkish: Phonetic cues, ideology, and ethnic boundaries in language

Busra Tasdemir, York University

14:00 – 15:30 Panel 5B – Kurdish geopolitics

Japan's diplomacy toward semi-sovereign actors: Lessons from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Akiko Yoshioka, Institute of Energy Economics, Japan

*How the Kurds shaped the security policy of reunited Germany:
Rethinking Operation Kurdish Aid (1991)*

Silvia Nicola, Bundeswehr Center for Military History and Social Sciences

Great power interference, threat perception, and the institutionalisation of non-state armed actors: Evidence from Iraq's Kurdish Peshmerga

Ruiheng Li, Peking University & Yiwei Jia, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

A geopolitical imperative defying revolutionary changes? Iran's relations with Iraqi Kurdish parties during the Cold War

Siarhei Bohdan, University of Regensburg

Is it truly transactionalism or status-seeking? Turkish foreign policy towards the PKK

Edoardo Lavezzo, University of York

Panel 5C – British historical accounts of the Kurds

Between deference and dominance: Freya Stark among the exiled Khajehvand Kurds

Himan Heidari, University of Roehampton

British colonial vision and travel writing: Kurdish identity in Gertrude Bell's archival narratives

Karzan Kareem Ameen, Salahaddin University-Erbil

The image of Kurdish women in European travelogues and early Kurdological Discourse (1800-1914)

Delzar Sadiq, Salahaddin University-Erbil

English-language reports of Behlül Pasha, the last Kurdish Emir of Bayazid

Gerald MacLean, University of Exeter

14:00 – 15:30 Panel 5D – Political economy and power in Iranian Kurdistan

History of the making of Kolbari: Accumulation and disposable life
Aso Javaheri, Simon Fraser University

The political economic of body and population: Demographic programs and the control of the Kurds in the Second Pahlavi Era (1953-1977)

Milad Moradi, Independent Researcher & Hesam Mohammadzadeh Institute for Humanities and Culture Studies

Everyday politics and ambivalent belonging among Kurdish tri-border communities during the post-1979 conflicts in Iran

Mostafa Khalili, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies & LSE Middle East Centre

Beyond tribes and states: Poliarchic substates of the Jaf Confederation in Eastern Kurdistan

Daniel Mahmoudi, University of Tehran

The impact of the landlord-peasant system on the socioeconomic structures of rural Kurdistan in Iran

Senour Ahmadi, University of Foggia & Serveh Ahmadi, Independent Researcher

Panel 5E – Gender, law and tradition

The impact of Iraq's 2025 Ja'fari Personal Status Law on the Kurdistan Region's legal autonomy and gender protections
Minatullah Allobaidi

Gendered mobility and cultural norms: How gender roles shape women's mobility experiences in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Shahla Wali Jabbar Shwan, Salahuddin University

Translating rape at the limits of language in post-Da'esh Iraq
Mairéad Smith, Brown University

15:30 – 16:00 Break

16:00 – 17:30 Plenary Session***Developing Kurdish Studies as a scholarly field***

A conversation between Marlène Schäfers, University of Utrecht and Kurdish Studies Journal and Welat Zeydanlioğlu, Kurdish Studies Network

17:30 – 18:30 Drinks reception



DAY THREE
FRIDAY 1 MAY 2026

09:00 – 10:30 Panel 6A – Kurdish representations in literature

*From the Orientalist domain to the geopolitical vacuum:
Representing the Kurd, a stateless nation, in western fiction (1892–2013)*
Shamisa Naseri, Independent Researcher

Feminist counter-archives: Kurdish women's memoir and fiction as politics of refusal
Essmat Sophie, Independent Researcher

Questioning nationalism: Kurdish women's sexual expression in the work of Bachtyar Ali, Jan Dost and Sema Kaygusuz
Elizabeth Pinkney, University of Exeter

Panel 6B – Beyond “voicelessness”: Kurdish women's audibility, refusal, performance, and situated resonance

“You know what happened to us”: Silence, refusal, and embodied testimony in Kurdish women's prison narratives
Berivan Kutlay Sarıkaya, University of Toronto

Hyphenated laughter: Performing Kurdish womanhood and belonging in Cansu Karabiyik's comedy
Özlem Atik, Istanbul Bilgi University

Revolutionary voice and the limits of liberal politics in Kurdistan
Marlene Schäfers, Utrecht University

Kurdish women's voices across Latin America: Speaking, being heard and the making of the authorised voice
Dilan Bozgan, Columbia Global Center in Santiago, Chile

Panel 6C – Responses to displacement

Competitive-state building: Governing refugees and displacement in Northern Kurdistan
Judith Hopperman, SOAS

Affective geographies of migration and return in the revolutionary afterlives of former Peşmerga
Nadine Skaff, University of Bern

Kurdish responses to the securitisation of Syrian refugees in Turkey
Durukan Imrie-Kuzu, LSE Middle East Centre

09:00 – 10:30 Panel 6D – Law making and governance in North and East Syria

Prophetic lawgiving in North and East Syria?
Stephen Knight, University of Oxford

Subsidising bread and civilian survival under rebel governance
Azad Hasan, Durham University

Syria: From centralisation to decentralisation – implications for peacebuilding, democratic governance, human rights, and regional security
Azad Dewanee, Independent Researcher

Kurds and other minorities in Syria: values, comparisons and interactions
David Phillips, University of Oxford

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:30 Panel 7A – Turkish authoritarianism, violence and the peace process

The authoritarian settlement playbook: Learning and conflict management in Turkey
Andrea Novellis, Independent Researcher

Embodied interpretations of violence: Understanding state violence through the perspectives of security officers in Turkish Kurdistan
Devran Koray Öcal, University of Bern

Rethinking peace under uncertainty: Kurdish identities, emotions and imaginations of a collective future during the current Peace Process in Turkey
Elif Sandal-Önal, Bielefeld University

Post-conflict reconstruction and the politicisation of heritage in Diyarbakır
Pelin Oral, EHESS

Panel 7B – Historical encounters between the Kurds and the State

Towards a history of Behdinan: Central Kurdistan in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire
Adnan Kegi, Université de Paris Cité

The Ulama as mediators: Evolving channels between the Safavid center and the Kurdish periphery
Akihiko Yamaguchi, Sophia University

The Kemalist regime's "Colonial-Style Administration" via the People's Houses (Halkevleri): Participation/representation, boundaries, and adaptation, (1930s–1940s)
Zehra Ayman, Independent Researcher

11:00 – 12:30 Panel 7C – Global Feminist solidarities

Demilitarisation as Feminist praxis: Decolonising climate justice through Indigenous and subaltern resistance

Nancy Mancias, California Institute of Integral Studies

The from "Half the Sky" to "Jin, Jiyan Azadî": A South-South comparison between Rojava and the Chinese Socialist Women's Movement

Yushan Huang, EHESS

Struggle for multiple identities: Drawing parallels between Kurdish women and Indigenous women's rights movements

Aynur Ünal, London College of Contemporary Arts

Panel 7D – Power and representation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Representation under pressure: Electoral reform, constitutional equality, and judicial centralisation in Iraq

Majida Ismael, Liverpool John Moores University

Catalysts of power: Formal and informal political institutions in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (2003-2023)

Raber Talaat Kaluri, University of Kurdistan Hewlêr

Pipelines of power: How partisan youth wings in Iraqi Kurdistan produce enduring career advantages

Ari Mamshae, Independent Researcher

Blow-out preventers? Limits of liberal power sharing approaches to the issue of natural resources in disputed territories: Hydrocarbons and Kirkuk in comparative perspective

Francis Owtram, University of Exeter

The family institution in PUK's power apparatuses

Tom Préel, Sorbonne University

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 15:30 Night and Fog in Kurdistan

Film Screening and Conversation with Director, Shilan Saadi and Producer, Gulay Kilicaslan

Close of conference