



KURDISH GENDER STUDIES NETWORK

KGSN REPORT ON ENGAGEMENT,
DEVELOPMENT, AND ACTIVITIES (2020–2026)

About the Kurdish Gender Studies Network (KGSN)

The Kurdish Gender Studies Network (KGSN) is dedicated to advancing rigorous, inclusive, and accountable scholarship on gender and sexuality in Kurdish contexts. Bringing together academic, activist, artistic, and community-based knowledge producers, the network fosters collective learning, strengthens epistemic agency, and supports multilingual and accessible scholarly engagement.



Kurdish Gender Studies Network: KGSN Report on Engagement, Development, and Activities (2020–2026)

September 2026

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Introduction

The Kurdish Gender Studies Network (KGSN) is a voluntary, global collective dedicated to advancing research, dialogue, and collaboration on gender and sexuality within Kurdish Studies. The network was established in 2020 in direct response to urgent discussions about sexual harassment and misogyny within the field. Since then, it has grown into an international community of just under 300 members subscribed to our mailing list. Many more scholars, students, writers, artists, translators, and activists also take part in our events on a regular basis.

This report provides a comprehensive record of KGSN's activities, events, and organisational development from 2020 to 2026. It documents six years of building an epistemic community grounded in feminist principles, multilingual accessibility, and global solidarity. KGSN is run entirely on a voluntary basis and receives no institutional funding. Each academic year (September–June), the steering committee develops a programme of activities aligned with the network's aims and objectives. While most events are held online, international conferences, such as the LSE Kurdish Studies Conferences² in 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026, have enabled in-person engagement, roundtable discussions, and wider academic participation.³

From its inception, KGSN has understood feminist organising as inseparable from accountability and collective care. The network's founding statement, "Male Violence and Sexual Harassment in Kurdish Studies: Proposed Plan of Actions" (August 2020), catalysed the establishment of KGSN and set out the principles that continue to guide our work. Two further public statements; "Êdî Bese! Endî Beso! Enough is Enough!" (distributed at the April 2023 LSE Kurdish Studies Conference) and the "KGSN Code of Conduct and Sexual Harassment Statement" (adopted by the 2026 Kurdish Studies Conference at the LSE), reaffirm our commitment to building safe, accountable, and supportive academic spaces. We encourage colleagues and institutions to circulate, adapt, and implement the KGSN Code of Conduct in their own contexts.

¹ The current committee consists of: Berivan Kutlay Sarikaya, Dilan Bozgan, Elif Genc, Emek Ergun, Emre Karakus, Enas Ridha, Farangis Ghaderi, Gulay Kilicaslan, Hakan Sandal-Wilson, Hasret Cetinkaya, Joanna Bochenska, Marlene Schäfers, Necla Acik, Ozlem Goner, Shahrzad Mojab, Susan Benson Sokmen, Umut Erel, Wendy Hamelink, and Yeter Tan. Previous members who made important contributions to the organisation of KGSN events include Birgul Yilmaz, Dilan Okcioglu, Ruken Isik, and Tebessum Yilmaz

² The Kurdish Studies Conference is organised by the LSE Middle East Centre and the University of Sheffield. It is part of the [Kurdish Studies Series](#) hosted within the LSE Middle East Centre and convened by Zeynep Kaya and Robert Lowe. We are grateful to the LSE Middle East Centre for supporting us with the publication of this report.

³ All posters and visual materials, including a poster outlining our aims and objectives, are available on our Instagram account: [@kurdishgenderstudies](#).

As a multilingual network, KGSN treats language politics as central to feminist knowledge production. English remains the primary language of communication, but selected events have been held in Kurdish Kurmanji, Kurdish Sorani, and Turkish. We aim to expand programming in Kurdish and other languages and welcome the support of volunteer interpreters. Securing funding to strengthen multilingual access and compensate translators remains a priority.

Between October 2020 and June 2026, KGSN organised more than fifty activities across online, in-person, and hybrid formats, featuring approximately 130 unique speakers. These included public panels, author and editor conversations, workshops, reading groups, roundtables, conference panels, teach-ins, and informal mentoring spaces. Together, they brought into conversation scholars, students, writers, artists, translators, and activists working across Kurdistan and its diasporas, Europe, the SWANA region, and the Americas.

Across six academic years, KGSN developed a sustained and expanding programme addressing themes such as Kurdish women's movements, gender and sexuality, language justice, decolonial methodologies, literature, art, feminist knowledge production, genocide, political imprisonment, abolition, revolutionary solidarities, and geo-political developments in Kurdistan.. This breadth reflects the network's commitment to creating spaces where intellectual, political, and creative work can be shared across borders, disciplines, and languages.

KGSN's activities demonstrate a consistent commitment to bridging academic and activist communities. The network collaborated with universities and collectives in Kurdistan, Europe, North America, and Latin America and convened panels at major international conferences, including the World Anthropological Union Congress in Guatemala. Reading groups and workshops provided sustained spaces for collective learning, while public panels and Rojava Solidarity teach-ins responded to urgent political developments, including the Jin Jîyan Azadî uprising in Rojhelat and ongoing struggles in Rojava.

This report also functions as an archive of six years of largely voluntary collective labour, from organising events and building relationships to coordinating speakers, moderating and translating discussions, and creating accessible multilingual spaces for intellectual and political exchange. It demonstrates that KGSN's history and objectives have been built through shared commitment, collaboration, and collective care. The network's activities show how feminist organising within Kurdish Studies has grown into a vibrant global community, one that responds to urgent political developments while nurturing long-term scholarly and activist connections.

Overall, the 2020–2026 period marks a phase of significant growth, consolidation, and widening participation. KGSN has become a central hub for Kurdish gender scholarship, feminist organising, and global solidarity, shaping the field through its exchange of knowledge, practices of solidarity, and collective forms of organising.

KGSN Aims and Objectives

The Kurdish Gender Studies Network (KGSN) is dedicated to advancing rigorous, inclusive, and accountable scholarship on gender and sexuality in Kurdish contexts. Bringing together academic, activist, artistic, and community-based knowledge producers, the network fosters collective learning, strengthens epistemic agency, and supports multilingual and accessible scholarly engagement. Its aims and objectives are as follows:

- 1. Advancing Knowledge**

KGSN promotes rigorous and diverse scholarship on gender and sexuality in Kurdish contexts. It embraces wide-ranging theoretical, methodological, cultural, and community-based approaches.

- 2. Inclusive Community**

KGSN cultivates an inclusive and intersectional academic community, supporting work across gender and sexuality, cultural production, language, literature, politics, media, migration, social justice, and a wide range of other areas central to Kurdish gender studies.

- 3. Ethical Mentorship and Collective Learning**

KGSN provides a safe and collegial environment that encourages informal mentoring, peer support, and collective learning, with particular attention to those facing marginalisation within Kurdish Studies.

- 4. Accessible and Multilingual Activities**

KGSN organises accessible scholarly activities, including panels, lectures, book launches, workshops, reading groups, and cultural engagements, in Kurdish, English, and other languages to broaden participation and deepen academic engagement.

- 5. Epistemic Agency and Visibility**

KGSN strengthens epistemic agency and visibility for scholars, activists, and cultural practitioners engaged in gender-related research and organising in Kurdish contexts, contributing to a vibrant global community committed to advancing Kurdish gender studies.

KGSN Statements

The Kurdish Gender Studies Network was founded on a commitment to feminist principles, collective care, and the transformation of Kurdish Studies into a field grounded in justice, accountability, and solidarity. Central to this mission has been the recognition that gendered violence, power abuse, and institutional marginalisation are not peripheral issues but structural conditions shaping the lives and labour of scholars within the field. The following statements document key moments in the emergence and evolution of KGSN's political and ethical commitments.

The first three statements, issued between 2020 and 2025, reflect the foundational impetus behind the creation of KGSN: the urgent need to confront sexual harassment, misogyny and gendered power imbalances within Kurdish Studies. These statements articulate a collective feminist intervention led by women scholars who refused silence and the normalisation of harm. They set out a vision for Kurdish Studies rooted in anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-homophobic values, and they outline concrete actions to build safer, more equitable academic and community spaces.

The fourth statement, issued jointly with the Kurdish Studies Network and the Kurdish Studies Journal in 2026, demonstrates how KGSN's mission extends beyond gender-specific concerns to encompass broader struggles for institutional survival and epistemic justice. In defending the [Centre for Kurdish Studies at the University of Exeter](#) against proposed budget cuts, KGSN affirms its commitment to safeguarding the infrastructures that sustain Kurdish scholarship, language teaching, archival preservation, and intellectual community.

Together, these statements form a record of KGSN's ongoing work to challenge structural violence, cultivate solidarity, and uphold the dignity and safety of all scholars in Kurdish Studies. They embody the core values of the network: justice, accountability, collective empowerment, and the belief that Kurdish Studies must be a space where all voices can participate freely and without fear.

KGSN Sexual Harassment Statement I (2020):

This foundational statement emerged at a moment when women scholars in Kurdish Studies were increasingly speaking out about experiences of sexual harassment, misogyny, and systemic gendered power imbalances in academic spaces. Issued anonymously by a collective of women scholars, it marked the first coordinated feminist intervention within the Kurdish Studies Network (KSN).

The statement not only exposed structural problems but also proposed a concrete plan of action to transform the field through mentorship, gender-inclusive academic practices, and the formation of the Kurdish Women's Studies Network in 2020, which was renamed the Kurdish Gender Studies Network (KGSN) the following academic year.

Male Violence and Sexual Harassment in Kurdish Studies: Proposed Plan of Action

Dear KSN members,

We are pleased to receive mostly strong and supportive responses from the KSN members. The Statement was widely circulated on other platforms including *Jadaliyya* and *Yeni Ozgur Politika*. It is translated in Kurdish and both versions were circulated by prominent academics and activists on social media many times. We certainly are delighted to hear your supportive feedback and constructive suggestions which have encouraged us to follow up with this statement:

First, writing the statement was a courageous act taken by women scholars, some of whom have been sexually harassed and subjected to male violence within Kurdish Studies. The intention is to generate, promote, and sustain an anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-homophobic culture and scholarship, and to build solidarity on the basis of these values among the membership of this network. We are fully aware of inadequacies of institutional policies and practices in confronting male power. We are against the intellectual oppression of women in academia, especially younger scholars and those who are in precarious positions.

Second, we intentionally remain anonymous to turn the gaze away from the individual to the *systematic* problem of male dominance and sexual violence against women. Raising ‘anonymity’ as an issue of concern is itself a silencing and divisive act. Patronising discourse of ‘victimhood’ or ‘trauma’ also moves the attention away from the perpetrators, both individual male colleagues as well as the institutions, and psychologises a persistent social and institutional problem.

Third, our goal is clear: We plan to raise awareness, take concrete actions, and call for solidarity to stop violence against women in Kurdish Studies. Inspired by some of your suggestions so far, we are proposing the following plan of action:

1. Reinstitute the Kurdish Women’s Studies Network.
2. Actively invite women to take different roles in academic conferences such as chairing a session, be a discussant or a commentator.
3. Mentor junior scholars in publishing, teaching, research projects, and journal review process.



Figure 1: Kurdish Women’s Studies Network’s Open Forum Poster, October 2020

4. Host seminars/webinars to discuss gender relations in all areas of Kurdish Studies.
5. Host seminars/webinars for women students and researchers to present their work.
6. Recruit women as editors and reviewers, in particular in the *Journal of Kurdish Studies*.

Finally, we appreciate the collegial exchanges on this Network. We hope that the KSN members allocate resources to promote, enhance, and set principles of equality, justice and solidarity in all their activities. You will soon hear from us about the forthcoming events for the academic year of 2020-2021.

On behalf of a group of women scholars in Kurdish Studies

August 10, 2020

KGSN Sexual Harassment Statement II (2023):

This statement was distributed as a leaflet at the Kurdish Studies Conference at the LSE in 2023. It served as a mobilisation tool aimed at shifting individual awareness into collective practice. By encouraging scholars to publicly read a pledge against sexual harassment at conferences and academic gatherings, it created a visible, performative act of solidarity. This statement helped sustain discussions of gendered violence in Kurdish Studies and contributed to the establishment of the KGSN reading group on “Sexual Harassment and Power Abuse” held between October and December 2024.



Figure 2: KGSN Êdî Bese Sexual Harassment Flyer, April 2024

KGSN Code of Conduct & Sexual Harassment; Statement III (2025):

Five years after the initial interventions, this statement reflects KGSN's evolution from an immediate feminist collective into a structured network with institutionalised principles. Responding to ongoing reports of harassment across both formal and informal academic spaces, it calls for the adoption of clear codes of conduct and a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment. This statement marks a shift from raising awareness to establishing enforceable norms, emphasising professionalism, safety, and accountability across all Kurdish Studies platforms.

KGSN Code of Conduct and Sexual Harassment Statement, November 2025

The Kurdish Gender Studies Network (KGSN) continues to receive reports of sexual harassment within the Kurdish Studies academic and community spaces, which remains a serious and ongoing concern. We urge organisers, moderators, and participants of all forums (e.g. conferences, workshops, seminars, talks) and platforms (e.g. scholarly networks, group chats on WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, and social media), whether formal or informal – online or in person – to adopt, uphold, and actively engage with a clear code of conduct that promotes professionalism and fosters a safe and respectful environment.

As a concrete measure, we strongly recommend implementing and reiterating a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment and affirming a commitment to inclusive, respectful, and harassment-free spaces for scholarly engagement. Upholding these standards is everyone's responsibility and essential to ensuring the dignity, safety, collegiality, and full participation of all members of our academic community.

Joint Statement with KSN and the Kurdish Studies Journal (2026)

This joint declaration was issued in response to proposed budget cuts at the University of Exeter that threatened the [Centre for Kurdish Studies](#) (CKS) in 2026, one of the few institutional homes for Kurdish Studies worldwide. By joining forces with the [Kurdish Studies Network](#) and the [Kurdish Studies Journal](#), KGSN positioned itself within a broader struggle for the survival of Kurdish Studies as a field. The statement highlights the structural vulnerabilities of Kurdish Studies, the importance of CKS's archival and educational work, and the epistemic marginalisation faced by Kurdish scholarship. It demonstrates KGSN's commitment not only to gender justice but also to defending the infrastructures that sustain Kurdish intellectual life.

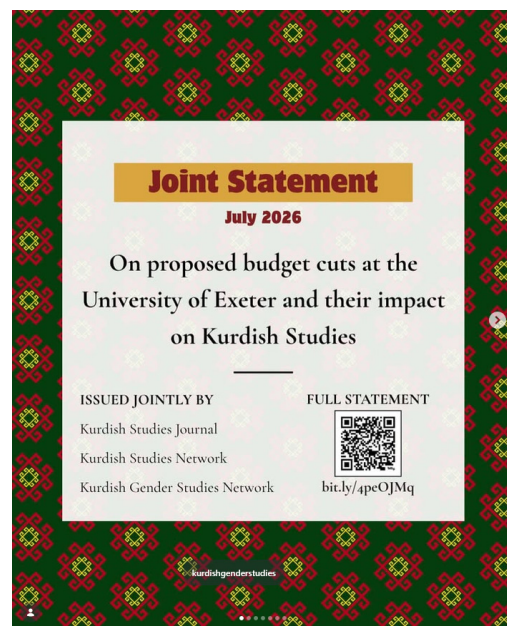


Figure 3: KGSN Joint Statement, July 2026

Statement regarding proposed budget cuts at the University of Exeter and their impact on Kurdish Studies, July 2026

The Kurdish Studies Journal, the Kurdish Studies Network, and the Kurdish Gender Studies Network—three leading scholarly institutions and networks in the field of Kurdish studies—are expressing their deep concern about the planned budget cuts in the University of Exeter’s Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, including those affecting the Centre for Kurdish Studies (CKS). The CKS is one of only a handful of dedicated, university-based centres worldwide that combine graduate education in Kurdish studies, Kurdish language instruction, and a permanent community of Kurdish studies scholars. We understand that all staff members at the CKS, alongside their colleagues at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies (IAIS), have been placed at risk of redundancy. With a planned reduction of teaching-related staff at a rate of 20-25%, these cuts will have devastating consequences for Kurdish studies, which is already structurally disadvantaged.

As a stateless field of study, Kurdish studies lacks the institutional support that many other area studies disciplines enjoy. Kurdish studies scholars routinely contend with epistemic violence, censorship, and political repression, while also facing chronic shortages of funding, academic infrastructure, and institutional recognition. In this context, Exeter’s Centre for Kurdish Studies has served as an indispensable institutional anchor for the discipline. Over the years, the CKS has trained dozens of graduate students, while its staff have produced internationally recognised scholarship that have transformed our understanding of Kurdish history, culture, politics, and society. The Centre is also home to one of the world’s most important Kurdish studies libraries, including the invaluable private collections of Chris Kutschera and Omar Sheikhmous. Its Kurdish Digital Archive, part of Exeter’s Digital Archive of the Middle East, is an exceptional initiative dedicated to preserving and providing open access to Kurdish archival materials that might otherwise be lost or destroyed.

We are deeply concerned that the proposed cuts will have profound consequences not only for the University of Exeter but for the wider field of Kurdish studies. They will diminish educational opportunities, reduce research capacity, and threaten the future of Kurdish language teaching. They also jeopardise scholarly initiatives that are essential for documenting and safeguarding Kurdish language, culture, history, and society. In this sense, the proposed cuts constitute a further act of epistemic marginalisation against an already vulnerable field, at a time when rigorous scholarship on the Kurds—a people who remain central to the political and geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East—is more important than ever.

Over the past two decades, the University of Exeter has made important investments in CKS, acquiring archival collections, building specialised library resources, and launching the Kurdish Digital Archive. The University has stated that it has no plans to close any disciplines or departments as a result of the cuts. We therefore urge the University of Exeter to reaffirm its commitment to preserving the institutional integrity of the Centre for Kurdish Studies and to continue investing in its staff, student body, and material resources.

KGSN Roundtables and International Conference Engagements

KGSN's roundtables and international conference panels have become key spaces for collective reflection, methodological exchange, and global feminist dialogue. These events bring together scholars and activists across institutions and geographies to debate gendered resistance, epistemic justice, and decolonial feminist methodologies. The following section highlights two central moments in this work: the KGSN roundtables at the LSE Kurdish Studies Conference (2025, 2026) and the network's panel at the World Anthropological Union Congress (WAU 2025), both of which exemplify KGSN's commitment to sustained, global conversations within and beyond Kurdish Studies.

KGSN Roundtables at LSE Kurdish Studies Conferences (2025–2026)

Across two consecutive years, KGSN organised well-attended and highly successful roundtables at the LSE Kurdish Studies Conferences in London, each drawing 25–30 participants. These sessions provided vital spaces for collective reflection, strategic planning, and community-building. They also demonstrated the growing visibility and relevance of Kurdish gender and queer scholarship within the wider field of Kurdish Studies.

2026 KGSN Roundtable: “Towards Building Decolonial Epistemic Infrastructures”

LSE Middle East Centre, 29 April 2026, London Facilitators: Necla Acik (LSE Middle East Centre) and Hakan Sandal-Wilson (LSE Department of Gender Studies)

The roundtable opened with an introduction to the Kurdish Gender Studies Network (KGSN), followed by participant introductions, many of whom were joining a KGSN space for the first time. The discussion centred on strengthening and expanding the network through decolonial, collaborative, and sustainable infrastructures.

Key Themes

1. **Expanding the Network:** Participants proposed developing subregional clusters (e.g., Kurdistan (Sorani and Kurmanji), Germany, Russian-speaking groups) while maintaining a horizontal, central network. There was strong interest in involving artists, activists, and practitioners, and in organising artist-focused events such as film screenings and exhibitions.
2. **Capacity:** Members emphasised the need for work-in-progress workshops, methods sessions, and structured mentoring schemes. Emotional support was highlighted as essential, especially for scholars working in hostile institutional environments. Regular drop-in/office hours were suggested.
3. **Language, Collaboration & Cross-Regional Exchange:** Participants encouraged more events in Kurdish, expanded reading groups, and joint activities with other regional networks. These initiatives require active coordination and facilitation by members.

4. **Communication Infrastructure:** Existing communication channels were seen as static. A moderated Signal group was proposed, though concerns about security and moderation were raised. Participants emphasised the need for a KGSN website, regular newsletters, and informal channels for sharing publications and updates.
5. **Funding & Independence:** Funding needs were discussed, especially for translation, events, and artist contributions. While project-based funding was seen as promising, concerns were raised about grant-writing workloads and institutional constraints. Crowdfunding and membership fees were considered but recognised as potentially exclusionary.
6. **Organisation & Workload:** Participants noted that organisational responsibilities currently fall on a small number of individuals. A distributed volunteer model was proposed, with roles such as newsletter editor, social media coordinator, and event organiser paired with the core group.

2025 KGSN Roundtable: “Connecting, Contributing, and Co-Shaping the Future of the Network”

LSE Kurdish Studies Conference, 12 June 2025 Facilitators: Necla Açıık (Middlesex University), Dilan Bozgan (UNSAM, Argentina), Hasret Çetinkaya (Manchester Metropolitan University), Emrah Karakuş (LSE)

This roundtable brought together 25 participants for a 1.5-hour discussion on the history, aims, and future of KGSN. The meeting highlighted the network’s role as a critical, alternative, and non-institutional space centering gender and queer scholarship while remaining open to diverse perspectives.

Participants emphasised that KGSN provides emotional support, solidarity, and a shared political and ethical grounding. It counters academic marginalisation and isolation, offering a particularly supportive environment for postgraduate students and early-career researchers.

Key Themes

1. **Accessibility, Decentralisation & Practical Barriers:** Suggestions included: – Strengthening ties with scholars in Kurdistan and co-organising events with universities such as the University of Rojava – Creating regional or language-based sub-networks (Sorani, Kurmanji, Zazaki, German) – Involving artists, authors, and activists – Addressing practical barriers such as time zones, political restrictions, internet access, and travel challenges – Increasing visibility for scholars based in Kurdistan.
2. **Community-Building, Communication & Sustainability:** Proposals included regular informal meetups, thematic clusters, a searchable member directory, a central communication platform, funding for interpreters, internship programmes, and strengthening institutional partnerships while maintaining horizontal governance.
3. **Support for Postgraduate Students & Early-Career Scholars:** Participants recommended work-in-progress colloquia, mentoring schemes, publication workshops, collective writing sessions, and targeted support for Kurdish women, queer, and trans scholars facing persecution or marginalisation.

4. **Methods Drop-In Sessions:** Suggested topics included decolonial methods, avoiding extractivism, reflexivity, ethical fieldwork, research in conflict settings, navigating positionality, and ethical storytelling.
5. **Conferences & Future Collaborations:** Participants expressed interest in organising a Kurdish Gender and Queer Studies Conference and strengthening collaboration with the Kurdish Studies Network (KSN).

KGSN Panel at the World Anthropological Union Congress (WAU 2025)

KGSN convened a two-session hybrid panel at the World Anthropological Union Congress in Antigua, Guatemala in November 2025, titled “Decolonising Gendered Knowledge: Feminist Epistemologies, Political Legitimacy, and the Anthropology of Resistance.” Organised by KGSN members Dilan Bozgan, Berivan Kutlay Sarıkaya, and Necla Açık, the panel brought together scholars working across Kurdistan, its diasporas, Latin America, South Asia, and Europe.

The panel brought together a diverse group of scholars working across Kurdistan, its diasporas, and other contexts of colonial violence and resistance. Paper presenters included Dilan Bozgan (Argentina–Chile, Bakur), Rohi Jehan (UK, Kashmir), Elif Genç (Canada, diaspora), Yushan Huang (France, Rojava), Dilan Şenay Yılmaz (Turkey), and Özlem Belcim Galip (UK).

Presenters examined gendered resistance, feminist epistemologies, and political legitimacy in contexts marked by war, occupation, exile, and colonial violence. The sessions generated engaged discussion (both on-site and online) on themes such as silent resistance, grief and healing, representation, language, positionality, and the hierarchies of knowledge production. The panel functioned as a South–South and Kurdistan–diaspora conversation, highlighting how feminist and subaltern struggles unsettle dominant academic paradigms and foreground epistemic justice.

The WAU panel built on discussions initiated at the LSE Kurdish Studies Conference 2025 and formed part of KGSN’s expanding international engagement. This trajectory continued at the LSE Kurdish Studies Conference 2026, where KGSN members contributed to several gender-focused panels and convened the second KGSN roundtable, helping shape emerging directions in Kurdish gender studies and reinforcing long-term intellectual infrastructures across institutions and borders.

This sustained participation reflects the growing recognition of Kurdish feminist and queer scholarship and ensures that questions of epistemic justice, decolonial methodologies, and gendered struggles remain central within the field.

Together, LSE 2025, WAU 2025, and LSE 2026 illustrate how KGSN is actively building durable intellectual infrastructures that counter epistemic violence and enable Kurdish gender studies to flourish across diverse academic and political contexts.

Network Engagement and Organisational Events

This section provides an overview of KGSN's wide-ranging organisational activities and public engagements from 2020 to 2026. Across virtual meetings, general assemblies, lecture series launches, open forums, panels, book discussions, collaborative initiatives, reading groups, workshops, and conference interventions, KGSN has built a dynamic and multilingual space for feminist and queer scholarship on Kurdistan. These events demonstrate how the network has cultivated community, strengthened intellectual infrastructures, and sustained global conversations on gender, resistance, and decolonial knowledge production. Together, they chart the evolution of KGSN as an active, growing, and collaborative academic network.

KGSN General Members Events

27 Sep 2024 – KGSN Virtual Meet and Greet/Academic Speed Dating.

Moderator: Emrah Karakuş (London School of Economics, UK). Sorani translation: Enas Sergul-Ridha (University of Exeter, UK). Kurmanji translation: Münevver Azizoğlu-Bazan (University of Bremen, Germany).

28 June 2023 – KGSN General Meeting

24 Sep. 2021 – KGSN 2021–2022

Presentations on the year's themes and activities by Elif Genç (Work in Progress), Necla Aşik (Reading Group), Özlem Göner (Method Café), and Joanna Bocheńska (Literature and Art).

07 May 2021 – Closing Discussion: "Moving Forward and Thinking Through (Re) building the Kurdish Women's Studies Network."

Organised by the KGSN Steering Committee.

09 Oct. 2020 – Kurdish Women's Studies Network's (KWSN) Open Forum

Open discussion to generate, promote, and sustain an anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-homophobic culture and scholarship in Kurdish Studies. Facilitator: Prof. Shahrzad Mojab, University of Toronto.

Panels

06 Mar 2025 – Panel Discussion: "How to Practice Transitional Solidarities in Universities of the 'Global North'?"

Speakers: Jineolojî Academy (Rojava/Europe), Emek Ergun (University of North Carolina at Charlotte), and Sardar Saadi (Carleton University, Canada, and University of Rojava). Moderator: Hasret Çetinkaya (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK). Languages: Kurdish and English.

14 Nov 2024 – Meet the Editors: “Writing for Academic Journals.”

Speakers: John Solomos (Ethnic and Racial Studies, University of Warwick), Richa Nagar (AGITATE! Unsettling Knowledges!, University of Minnesota), Ronay Bakan (Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies, Johns Hopkins University), and Marlene Schäfers (Kurdish Studies, Utrecht University). Moderator: Umut Erel (The Open University, UK).

31 Jan 2024 – Special-Issue Launch: “Kurdish Queer Studies,” Kurdish Studies.

Speakers: Hakan Sandal-Wilson, Tebessüm Yılmaz, Emrah Karakuş, Kaan Akin, and Gea Piccardi. Moderator: Marlene Schäfers.

28 Feb 2024 – Panel Discussion: “The First Anniversary of the 2023 Earthquake and Its Lingering Gendered Effects.”

Speakers: Nevin İl (feminist activist, Amed), Mizgin (feminist activist, Denmark), and Zelal Ayman (feminist activist, Istanbul). Moderator: Handan Çağlayan. Languages: Turkish and English.

28 Mar 2024 – Panel Discussion: “Language Justice, Translation, and Knowledge Production.”

Panellists: Nancy V. Piñeiro (SUNY Binghamton, US) and Hasret Çetinkaya (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK). Moderators: Dilan Bozgan (EIDAES/UNSAM, Argentina) and Yeter Tan (Binghamton University, US).

24 May 2024 – Roundtable Discussion: “Colonial Violence: Genocide, Political Prisoners, and Abolition.”

A discussion of colonial and racial state violence focusing on political prisoners, resistance, and abolition in Palestine, the Black Americas, and Kurdistan. Speakers: Özlem Göner (City University of New York), Rabab Abdulhadi (San Francisco State University), Basil A. Farraj (Birzeit University), Joy James (Williams College), Juliana Morais de Goes (University of California San Diego), and Yeter Tan (Binghamton University). Organisers/Moderator: Özlem Göner.

01 Oct 2022 – Special Panel and Open Forum: “The Feminist Uprising/Revolution in Rojhelat and Iran and Transnational Feminist Solidarities.”

Speakers: Shahrzad Mojab (University of Toronto) and Farangis Ghaderi (University of Exeter). Moderator: Özlem Göner (City University of New York).

02 May 2022 – Panel: Decoloniality and Kurdish Gender Studies: Reflections from the Reading Group.

Speakers: Necla Açıık, Tebessüm Yılmaz, Berivan Kutlay Sarıkaya. Moderator: Şafak Kılıçtepe.

22 Apr 2022 – Reading Group and Method Café Panel Discussion:

“How Do Decolonising Approaches and Methodologies Speak to Kurdish Gender Studies?”

10 Mar 2022 – Panel: “Women and Art in Kurdistan and Beyond.”

Speakers: Elif Berk, “Art, Existence, and Freedom”; and Nuveen Barwari, “4 Sisters, 3 Dresses: Exploring the Multiple Layers of Kurdish Diaspora, Feminism, and Abstract Painting Through Reused Mixed-Media Art Practices.” Organiser/Moderator: Ruken Işık.

09 Apr 2021 – Panel: “Kurdish Women: Challengers and Catalyzers of Gender Resistance.”

Speakers: Shilan Fuad Hussain “Kurdish Women’s Role in Modern Society”, Nerina Weiss “I never wanted to be a hero”, Joanna Bocheńska “Trauma and Resistance: Yezidi Women Speak About Their ISIS Slavery Experiences”, and Vera Eccarius-Kelly “Kurdish Women in Diaspora”. Moderator/Organiser: Shilan Fuad Hussain.

05 Feb 2021 – Panel: “Sounds, Sketches, and Dreams of Kurdish Women.”

Speakers: Rojda Tuğrul, “The Two Rivers of Mesopotamia”; and Fatemeh Karimi, “Kurdish Women Activists in Komala: From Domestic Space to Armed Struggle.” Moderator/Organiser: Shahrzad Mojab.

08 Jan 2021 – Panel: “Language, Gender and Religion: Kurdish Alevis and Yezidis in Diaspora.”

Speakers: Orkide İzci “Home as a concept of belonging(s)”, Golala Kamangar “Women, their presence and worships in Kurdish religions”, Dilşa Deniz “Kurdish Alevi studies: Women, field and masculine resistance”, and Birgül Yılmaz “Language, gender and identity: Kurdish-Alevi women learning Kurmanji in London.” Moderator/Organiser: Birgül Yılmaz.

18 Dec 2020 – Panel: “Women’s Voices in Kurdish Literature.”

Speakers: Mari R. Rostami “Women and feminism in Kurdish theatre”, Wendelmoet Hamelink “Who do we hear? Listening to the Kurdish female voice after an era of marginalisation”, Shilan Fuad Hussain “Kurdish women’s poetry: Red rain over Kurdistan”, Clémence Scalbert-Yücel, and Farangis Ghaderi “The invisibilisation of women writers: A study of Kurdish literature in English translation”. Moderator/Organiser: Farangis Ghaderi.

04 Dec 2020 – Panel: “Research on the Ground: Reflexivity and Positionality in Kurdish Studies.”

Speakers: Ronay Bakan “Studying a conflict-affected zone: Reflections on fieldwork in Surici, Diyarbakir 2016–2017”, Sevin Gülfar Sağniç “From “research” to self-decolonisation: Reflections on researching your own traumatised community”, Sevgi Arslan “Production, Maintenance and Operation of Race Logic in Turkish Education”, Deniz Yöncü “Decolonising Security Studies”, Marlene Schäfers “Being there, being white, being woman: Reflections from Fieldwork in Kurdistan”, and Dilan Okcuoğlu “I will tell you one story, you will tell the rest!”: Positionality and reflexivity in a war-torn Context”. Moderator/Organiser: Dilan Okcuoğlu.

20 Nov 2020 – Panel: “State Violence and Kurdish Women’s Activism on the Ground.”

Speakers: Berivan Kutlay Sarıkaya “Gendered Narratives of Diyarbakir Military Prison”, Mediha Sorma “Subaltern Mothering and Political Elsewhere: Militant Mothers of Kurdish Resistance Towards a Stateless Freedom”, Esin Düzel “Between Victimhood and Resistance: Other Faces of the Political in Women’s Activism” and Ruken Işık “Mobilising Grief: Claiming the Bodies of Kurdish Women”. Discussant: Necla Acik. Moderator/Organiser: Gülay Kılıçaslan.

13 Nov 2020 – Panel “Kurdish Women, Resistance and Remembrance”.

Speakers Handan Çağlayan “Women in the Kurdish Movement: Mothers, Comrades and Goddesses.” and Susan Benson-Sökmen, “The Poetry of the Past: Resistance and Remembrance in the Kurdish Borderlands of the Modern Middle East.” Moderator/Organiser: Shahrzad Mojab.

Meet the Author/Book Launches

04 Dec 2025 – Meet the Author: Nisan Alici (University of Derby, UK), Transitional Justice and the Kurdish Conflict.

Discussants: Güneş Daşlı (Loughborough University, UK) and Özgür Sevgi Göral (CETOBAC, France). Moderator: Hasret Çetinkaya (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK).

29 Apr 2025 – Meet the Author: Alex Pillen (University College London, UK), Endurance: Speaking Kurdish in a Warped World.

Discussants: Marlene Schäfers (Utrecht University, Netherlands) and Joanna Bocheńska (Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland). Moderator: Hasret Çetinkaya (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK).

24 April 2024 – Literature: Re-writing the Past: Kurdish Diaspora Narratives at the Intersection of Memory, Historiography, and Politics.

A discussion with the authors Choman Hardi (Whispering Walls, Afsana Press, 2023) & Essmat Sophie (Dancing Amid Fire, Rising Above Ruins, Transnational Press, 2023). Moderator: Hevin Karakurt (Stanford University).

17 Apr 2024 – Meet the Author: Nazan Üstündağ, The Mother, the Politician, and the Guerrilla: Women’s Political Imagination in the Kurdish Movement.

In conversation with Nisrin Elamin and Çağrı Yoltar. Hybrid event held at the University of Toronto.

09 Nov 2023 – Meet the Author: Marlene Schäfers (Utrecht University), Voices That Matter: Kurdish Women at the Limits of Representation in Contemporary Turkey.

Moderators: Shahrzad Mojab and Susan Benson-Sökmen. Held hybrid at the University of Toronto and online.

25 Oct 2023 – Meet the Author: Mustafa Topal, “The Constitution of Gender, Love and Sexuality in the PKK.”

Discussant: Christian Klesse (Manchester Metropolitan University). Moderator: Necla Açık.

27 Sep 2023 – Meet the “Purple Translators”: Gültan Kışanak’s The Purple Color of Kurdish Politics.

Panel with the book’s editors (Janet Biehl, Emek Ergün, Ruken Işık) and some of its translators (Hülya Osmanağaoğlu, Paula Darwish, Kumru Toktamış, Ulrike Flader, Elif Genç and Çağrı Yoltar). Moderator: Berivan Kutlay Sarıkaya.

22 May 2022 – Meet the Author: Ava Homa (novelist).

Organisers/Moderators: Farangis Ghaderi and Joanna Bocheńska.

31 Mar 2022 – Meet the Author: Jana Seyda (poet and novelist).

Organisers/Moderators: Farangis Ghaderi and Joanna Bocheńska.

25 Feb 2022 – Meet the Author: Zeyneb Yaş (writer and archivist).

Organisers/Moderators: Farangis Ghaderi and Joanna Bocheńska.

05 Mar 2021 – Meet the Author.

Speakers: Dilar Dirik, The Kurdish Women’s Movement: History, Theory, Practice; and Houzan Mahmoud, “Telling and Writing Our Own Stories: Kurdish Women’s Stories as an Example.” Moderator/Organiser: Shahrzad Mojab.

Collaborative Initiatives

May-August 2026 – Collaborative Summer Study Group: The Colonization of Kurdistan; History, Political Economy and Gender.

A four-part summer study group. City Kurds, KGSN and The Emergency Committee for Rojava.

25 Jan 2026 – Teach-in and Emergency Solidarity Meeting with the Emergency Committee for Rojava (ECR).

Speakers from universities in Rojava. Moderator: Gülay Kılıçaslan (Carleton University, Canada). Languages: Kurdish and English. Approximately 250 participants.

14 Jan 2025 – Panel Discussion: “Women’s Revolution, Conflict in Syria, and the Future of Rojava.”

Speakers: Jineolojî Academy (Rojava/Europe). Moderator: Hasret Çetinkaya (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK). Languages: Kurdish and English.

Reading Groups

Dec '24–May '25 – KGSN Reading Group: “Remembering Transnational Solidarities, Envisioning Revolutionary Futures.”

Organiser/Moderator: Susan Benson-Sökmen (York University, Toronto). Session dates: 13 December 2024; 24 January 2025, with guest author Alina Sajed; 28 February 2025; 21 March 2025; 30 April 2025; and 30 May 2025.

Oct–Dec 2023 – Reading Group: “Sexual Harassment and Power Abuse.”

Organisers: Necla Açık and Tebessüm Yılmaz.

Oct '21–May '22 – Reading Group: “Decolonizing Approaches and Methodologies.”

Organisers: Necla Açık, Berivan Kutlay Sarıkaya, Tebessüm Yılmaz, Elif Genç, and Susan Benson-Sökmen. Session dates: 15 October 2021, 8 November 2021, 10 January 2022, 14 February 2022, 14 March 2022, and 16 May 2022.

Workshops

15 Nov 2021 – KGSN Work-in-Progress Closed Workshop.

Presentations by Derya Kılıç, “Status and Representations of Women in Iraqi Kurdistan Television Programs: Rûdaw and Kurdsat” (Discussant: Anya Rebrî); Erika González Flores, “Kurdish Women’s Cinema” (Discussant: Tebessüm Yılmaz); Dilan Salik, “‘Ordinary’ Kurdish Women’s Everyday Life Practices” (Discussant: Nil Mutluer); and Mairéad Smith, “Spaces of Intimacy and Betrayal: An Exploration of Everyday Violence in Şingal” (Discussant: Abby Leonard). Participants: Sophie Essmat, İda Käyhkö, Elif Genç, Flavia Paniz, Eleonora Piccardi, and Gülay Kılıçaslan.

Conferences

29 April 2026 – LSE KGSN Roundtable: Towards Building Decolonial Epistemic Infrastructures: Strengthening and Expanding the Kurdish Gender Studies Network (KGSN).

Facilitators: Necla Acik (LSE Middle East Centre) and Hakan Sandal-Wilson (LSE, Department of Gender Studies).

05–06 Nov 2025 – KGSN Panel at the World Anthropological Union Congress, Guatemala (hybrid): “Decolonizing Gendered Knowledge: Feminist Epistemologies, Political Legitimacy, and the Anthropology of Resistance.”

Papers by Dilan Bozgan, Rohi Jehan, Elif Genç, Yushan Huang, Dilan Şenay Yılmaz, Özlem Belçim Galip, and Necla Açık. Panel convenors: Dilan Bozgan, Berivan Kutlay Sarıkaya, and Necla Açık.



KGSN Roundtable

at the
LSE Kurdish Studies Conference in London (HYBRID)
WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL 2026 | 15:30 – 17:00 (BST)

JOIN US ONLINE

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 Gender Studies*

Room 1.07, 1st Floor, CKK Building and on Zoom (**HYBRID EVENT**)

Zoom link to join the hybrid roundtable (no registration required):

<https://lse.zoom.us/j/83425499773>

Please note that face-to-face attendance requires registration at the conference.

Figure 4: KGSN Roundtable Poster, LSE
April 2026

12 Jun 2025 – KGSN Roundtable at the LSE Kurdish Studies Conference, London: “A Collaborative Meeting to Connect, Contribute, and Co-shape the Future of the Kurdish Gender Studies Network.”

Facilitators: Necla Aık (Middlesex University London), Dilan Bozgan (Universidad Nacional de San Mart n, Argentina), Hasret etinkaya (Manchester Metropolitan University), and Emrah Karakuş (London School of Economics).

24-25 April 2023 KGSN Intervention at the LSE Kurdish Studies Conference

Distribution of leaflet on sexual harassment “Ed  Bese”.



Figure 5: Panel Opening at the LSE Kurdish Studies Conference, April 2023

KGSN Logo

The network’s visual identity forms part of its broader public presence. A new KGSN logo has been designed by the Erbil-based Kurdish artist Shayan Shahir Nuradeen in 2026, a visual artist whose work includes paintings, portrait photography, digital illustrations, and murals.⁴ This replaces a previous KGSN image used called “Gloria” by Kaushalya Bannerji, aka Red Balloon, who is a lesbian of colour and disabled artist, poet, and writer.⁵ The KGSN logo has accompanied the Network’s publications, conferences, public events, and digital communications since its introduction. The artwork reflects the Network’s commitment to Kurdish artistic production alongside feminist scholarship.

⁴ Her portfolio can be viewed at www.shayannuradeen.com and www.ateliershayan.com

⁵ The artist’s portfolio can be viewed at her blog “Ear to the Ground” <https://eartotheound.blog/>



Figure 6: KGSN logo, March 2026

Visibility of the Network in Scholarly Work

The emergence of the KGSN and its growing impact on the field have been examined by several authors in Kurdish Gender Studies. The summaries below highlight how the network's visibility and contributions are reflected across recent scholarly publications.

In the interview conducted by Schäfers (2021), Prof. Shahrzad Mojab reflects on her long-standing personal, political, and intellectual engagement with Kurdish women and situates the 2020 re-launch of the Kurdish Women's Studies Network within this broader trajectory. The article highlights the organisation of the first series of online panels during the 2020–21 academic year and traces the historical roots of the network by revisiting the International Kurdish Women's Studies Network (IKWSN), founded in 1996, demonstrating the continuity and evolution of Kurdish feminist organising that culminated in the development of the KGSN.

In their brief contribution to the *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kurdische Studien*, Açıık and Kutlay-Sarıkaya (2022) report on the development of the KGSN during its first two years. They compare the current profile of scholars involved in Kurdish Gender Studies with that of two decades ago, when the field was still in its infancy. Their observations highlight a marked shift in the composition of the network: it now includes many more young Kurdish scholars who began their academic careers in Kurdistan and are continuing their work in Europe and North America. The network also brings together a new generation of non-Kurdish scholars whose interest in Kurdish Gender Studies has been shaped, in part, by the Rojava Revolution.

In their co-authored article “Contextualising Kurdish Gender Studies: Decolonial Feminist Knowledge Production and the Genesis of the Kurdish Gender Studies Network,” Açıık, Kutlay-Sarıkaya, Ghaderi, and Kılıçaslan (2023) situate the formation of the KGSN within the broader development of Kurdish Gender Studies (KGS) and the growing influence of women and queer scholars in Kurdish Studies (KS) since 2010. They highlight how both KGSN and KS have been shaped by the colonial legacies surrounding Kurdistan and the Kurdish question, while also demonstrating how Kurdish women’s and gender-focused scholarship has often been marginalised within KS. The authors argue that the network’s formation is not merely an academic initiative but a transformative praxis that challenges hegemonic narratives and reclaims epistemic agency.

Bocheńska, Hamelink, Salih, and Keskin (2023) examine the efforts of Kurdish women to protect and revitalise the Kurdish language, focusing on their contributions to Kurdish cultural expression and literary creation. Their analysis includes reflections on the KGSN Kurmanji-language panel held on 31 March 2022 by Joanna Bocheńska and Farangis Ghaderi with the poet and writer Jana Seyda from Kobanê, who discussed how the fairy tales told to her in childhood by her grandmother, and the formative role of early memories, have shaped her literary inspiration.

In his introduction to the special issue on Kurdish Queer Studies in the *Kurdish Studies* journal, Sandal-Wilson (2023) underscores the significance of the KGSN by noting that feminist engagements with postcolonial and decolonial approaches in Kurdish Studies have created space for queer conversations, a development clearly reflected in the network’s organising efforts. In his subsequent publication “On the (im)possibility of the Kurdish Queer” (2024), he highlights the launch of the Special Issue on Kurdish Queer Studies at the KGSN in January 2024 as an important moment and reflects on the political dynamics that have long undermined the legitimacy of Kurdish queer imaginaries, preventing their articulation and visibility until now. He emphasises the importance of platforms like the KGSN in providing the intellectual and communal spaces necessary for these conversations to emerge, arguing that Kurdish Studies stands to benefit substantially from queer feminist theoretical frameworks and the lived experiences of queer communities, while also contributing critical perspectives to queer theory in the Middle East and beyond.

In her article “Affectionate Research: Feminist Vulnerability and Queering the Field,” Yilmaz (2023) presents the KGSN as a crucial feminist and queer intervention in Kurdish

Studies, offering alternative ways of knowing for early-career researchers who often face marginalisation within mainstream academic structures. She argues that the network's emergence signals an epistemological and methodological shift in the field, creating spaces where scholars can challenge entrenched hierarchies, confront isolation, and cultivate more inclusive and transformative research practices. Drawing on her own positionality, Yilmaz describes how the network's conversations, workshops, and reading groups have profoundly shaped her doctoral work and provided vital forms of solidarity, care, and shared experience.

Taken together, these publications demonstrate how the KGSN has become a generative intellectual and collaborative hub within Kurdish Gender Studies, shaping research agendas, enabling new conversations, and connecting scholars across regions, disciplines, and generations. Beyond journal articles, the network has also contributed to the emergence of significant book projects: the collective translation of *The Purple Color of Kurdish Politics* (2022), which brought together more than twenty feminist translators, and Shahrzad Mojab's edited volume *Kurdish Women: History, Culture, and Resistance* (2024), featuring seventeen contributors, many of whom first shared their work through the KGSN lecture series between 2020 and 2022. These initiatives underscore the network's role in fostering sustained collaboration, expanding the visibility of Kurdish feminist scholarship, and supporting the production of new knowledge across diverse formats.



Figure 6: Book cover of Gültan Kışanak (ed.) (2022) *The Purple Color of Kurdish Politics*.

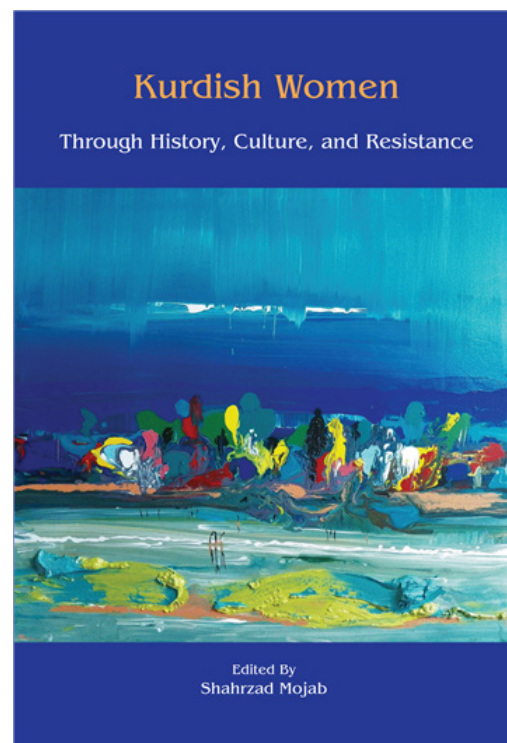


Figure 7: Book cover of Shahrzad Mojab (ed.) (2024) *Kurdish Women Through History, Culture and Resistance*.

Looking Ahead

Over the past six years, we have come to recognise that sustaining the KGSN is fundamentally about nurturing the relationships, dialogues, and shared political commitments that give life to our work. The Kurdish Gender Studies Network operates within a discipline shaped by Kurdish statelessness, colonial fragmentation, and persistent epistemic marginalisation. It therefore depends on dedicated spaces where feminist and queer scholarship can be debated, translated, challenged, and collectively sustained across institutional, linguistic, and geopolitical borders.

Anchored in these shared commitments, the future growth of KGSN depends on sustaining and expanding the collective momentum that has animated the network since its relaunch. We invite scholars, activists, artists, and all those engaged in Kurdish Gender Studies to join our community and contribute to its ongoing transformation. Crucially, we encourage active members to deepen their engagement, whether by organising panels and reading groups, providing mentorship, advancing translation initiatives, or participating in KGSN events. The strategic priorities highlighted during our recent roundtable—broadening our reach across sub-regions, forging stronger links with scholars, activists, and artists based in Kurdistan, expanding multilingual programming, and developing newsletters—offer a clear roadmap for members to take initiative. Through these joint efforts, we will not only maintain momentum and deepen our collaborative practices but also continue to push the boundaries of Kurdish Gender Studies as a field.

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