



# **The KCK Solution for the Êzîdî Community**

**An interview with Sozdar Avesta, member  
of the KCK General Presidential Council**

**In an extensive interview, Sozdar Avesta talks about the importance of Êzîdî history and culture for Kurdistan and the Middle East, the many attacks on the Êzîdî community in the last centuries, the genocide of 2014, the need for the Êzîdî community to return to its homeland, today`s success of the Self-Administration of Sinjar and the resistance of Sinjar`s population against the Baghdad-Erbil deal of October 9, 2020.**



We have been organizing ourselves under the umbrella of the Kurdistan Democratic Communities Union (KCK) since 2005. Organized in different areas of life – economy, culture, self-defense, law, social life, diplomacy, politics – we strive to support and build structures of self-governance in all four parts of Kurdistan and the Kurdish diaspora. All our member organizations come together under the roof of the `People`s Congress` (Kongra Gel) which constitutes our highest decision-making institution. Thus, even under the hardships of war and colonial state policy we work everyday to put our vision of a self-governed, just and sustainable society into practice

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**Many people have only known about the Êzîdîs since the genocide committed by the Islamic State (IS) in August 2014. What is the significance of the Êzîdî community and its culture for Kurdistan and the Middle East?**

Many people today do not know very much about the Êzîdî society. On August 3, 2014, the IS carried out a massacre in Ezidxane, the home region of the Êzîdîs. A brutal genocide took place there at that time. In connection with the people who were murdered or kidnapped by IS at that time and the many women who were sold on markets, the Êzîdî society received strong international attention. In addition, the resistance in Ezidxan, which has been ongoing for seven years, is also an important topic regionally and internationally. However, it is clear, of course, that the Êzîdî society cannot be understood solely on the basis of what has happened in recent years.

The Êzîdîs are one of the oldest communities in Mesopotamia and the Middle East. They lived in this region already thousands of years before Christ. It is a society whose members have made significant contributions to the natural way of life of the Neolithic society and to the Neolithic revolution. This characterizes the Êzîdî community. Their religion has a very humanistic character. It is strongly based on the belief that everything is filled with life. This community is strongly connected to its earth and lives from its yields. It practices animal husbandry and agriculture and collects natural herbs. It is a society that has lived on this earth for thousands of years



and has given life to the values of humanity.

Before the emergence of Islam, when there were only two monotheistic religions, the peoples of the Middle East preserved their own identities, languages, traditions, and beliefs. However, after the spread of Islam in the region, the Êzîdî society was most affected by the violence of Islam. This is because attempts were made to change the religion of the Êzîdîs and alienate them from their faith. For this reason, many severe attacks on them took place. Armed horsemen attacked Êzîdî villages and towns and murdered the people living there. Many people were kidnapped at that time and were brutally forced to convert to Islam.

The Êzîdî community has lived in the Middle East for thousands of years. It has always lived within the geographical boundaries of Kurdistan. When Kurdistan had not yet been divided, the Êzîdîs lived in an area that stretched from East and North Kurdistan [Southeast Turkey] to South Kurdistan and Rojava. Unfortunately, we do not have the possibility to show the Êzîdî settlement areas on a map here. There are also Êzîdîs in East Kurdistan along the Armenian border and in Russia.

In North Kurdistan they have mostly lived in the regions of Colemêrg, Batman, Sêrt, Mêrdîn, Viranşehir and Riha. Êzîdîs have lived in North Kurdistan for a long time. They call this region 'Welate Xalta' ['The Land of Xalta']. There were 366 holy places, so-called Qubey centers, of the Êzîdîs in this area. These were also Êzîdî pilgrimage



sites. These places were part of the Êzîdî identity.

In South Kurdistan, Êzîdîs still live in the regions of Colemêrg, Dohuk and Zaxo. We call this area `Welata Sheikh` [ `The land of the Sheikh` ]. The center of Êzîdîsm is also located there: the holy Laleş, which is known as a place of pilgrimage for the Êzîdîs. They go there to pray, offer sacrifices and cleanse themselves of their sins. It is also the knowledge center of Êzîdîsm. The main authorities of the Êzîdî community such as Baba Sheikh, Mala Miran and `those who have two names` who sacrifice everything to serve the Êzîdî faith are located there. Êzîdîs also live in the region stretching from Sinjar to Mosul. The Sinjar region, especially Mount Sinjar, is an important center of Ezidyan. This region has always been populated mostly by Êzîdîs.

Êzîdîs also live in Rojava. The areas of Hesêkê, Amude, Tirbespiyê, Serêkaniyê up to Efrîn and along the border to North Kurdistan are Êzîdî settlement areas.

Islam and the rulers in the region repeatedly attacked the various societies in the Middle East. Especially from the 19th century onwards and after the establishment of nation states in the region. Numerous Arab states emerged at that time. The slogan of these nation-states was: one state, one flag, one nation and one religion. After their establishment these states attacked many different communities even more. The Assyrian, Chaldean, Alevi and Êzîdî communities were forced to leave their homeland. In the wake of this, the Êzîdî society faced severe attacks.



Unfortunately, today both the settlement area and the number of Êzîdîs have decreased greatly. This is because countless massacres have been committed against them. The majority and the most severe massacres against the Êzîdîs were committed by the Turkish state, especially after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. In North Kurdistan, Êzîdîsm was completely banned at that time. Êzîdîs could not openly embrace their identity. Their holy places in North Kurdistan were all looted and destroyed. Especially from the middle of the 20th century, the Êzîdî population which had remained in its villages in North Kurdistan was practically imprisoned in their homes. The Êzîdî community has been massively broken, massacred, displaced and deprived of their villages and land. Their culture was heavily manipulated and their language was banned.

Yet, the Êzîdîs are the root of the Kurdish people. They do not speak a different language. Their language is Kurmanci. All their prayers and holy books such as Zend Avesta and Mishafa Reş were written in Kurmanci. Already at the time when Islam and its sacred book emerged, the library of the Êzîdîs was looted and destroyed. Therefore, the Êzîdî community today has only a very limited written history, that is, a holistic, complete history. Especially in the course of the last 200 years, Western researchers, e.g. from Europe, the USA and Great Britain, have explored the Middle East. They have also been interested in and done research on the Êzîdî community. Their research was mainly based on oral sources. There is only little



research based on written sources. Another reason is that Êzîdîs had not been able to attend state schools. Attending school was tantamount to denying their religion, faith and culture and to alienating themselves from them. This was forced upon them in school. Therefore, until 40 years ago, there were few in the Êzîdî community who had attended school.

The emergence of the Freedom Movement and Rêber Apo's [Abdullah Öcalan] ideas and philosophy have had a strong impact on the Êzîdî society in particular. Accordingly, it quickly began to organize itself along these ideas. Rêber Apo had previously developed his philosophy of a free life, equality, freedom of all religions and beliefs, freedom of women, natural life and an ecological-democratic society in North Kurdistan. Due to these ideas, the genocide of the Êzîdîs and their cultural assimilation was reduced in the course of the last 40 years. This was achieved due to the resistance and support of the Freedom Movement and Rêber Apo's ideas. Today, there is still an Êzîdî community in Kurdistan. It can openly embrace its Êzîdî identity and take care of itself. This is the result of the freedom struggle of the people of Kurdistan.

Previously, the sense of honor of the Êzîdîs had been played with heavily, not only during the massacres. Their values had been manipulated. They had been excluded from society and treated disparagingly. Their food was not eaten and their culture was ridiculed. They could not even buy or sell things. All this influenced the Êzîdî community very negatively in the past and led to its rigid





and dogmatic form.

Despite all this, it is a community whose contribution to the millennia of development in this region is huge. It has historically made a great contribution in the field of language, culture and the defense of social values. Rêber Apo has analyzed all this very comprehensively in the past. He has talked about the fact that today, as a Freedom Movement and as the people of Kurdistan, we have been brought back to life on this basis and are fighting for freedom. Therefore, according to Rêber Apo, we owe a lot to the Êzîdî and Alevi communities, especially to their women. Because they have always resisted and defended Kurdish culture, language and traditions. They have kept the spirit of resistance alive until today.

These are the key points we wanted to briefly address to introduce the Êzîdî community. It is a resistant and venerable community that has tremendous willpower. In the last 200 years, 74 massacres have been committed against the Êzîdîs. They were expelled from their homeland 74 times, regardless of the internal migration that existed anyway. Especially after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the Êzîdîs were repeatedly expelled and attacked. The Ba'ath regime of Saddam Hussein also pursued a similar policy. They were also expelled from other parts of Kurdistan. Many Êzîdîs have therefore left Kurdistan. In order not to lose their identity and to protect their existence, the Êzîdî community has always put up enormous social resistance.



**In Europe, many democratic forces follow the slogan 'Refugees Welcome!' and demand that refugees be allowed to flee to EU countries. Hundreds of thousands of Êzîdîs live in Europe today. How do you evaluate the refugee policy of the EU countries, especially in relation to the Êzîdî community?**

Undoubtedly, a society does not flee voluntarily. The existence of humans is closely related to their land. In particular, the faith of the Êzîdî and the Alevi community is closely connected to this region. Their faith is a part of Kurdistan and the Middle East. When they are displaced from their homeland, it does not just mean that they leave their land. Rather, their entire existence is put in very great danger.

The societies and countries of Europe, but also of other parts of the world, regard the affected communities only as refugees. Some of these societies openly express their empathy with them. Their goal is only to open the door for these refugees and assimilate them. This policy is very dangerous and wrong. It leads to the destruction of human values. The societies concerned must be allowed to remain in their homelands and live where their roots are. Herbs that are planted in a soil that is foreign to them cannot flourish as they do in the soil that they are familiar with. This is the same with human societies. A society that is displaced from its homeland becomes dependent on rulers, nation-states and the hegemonic global powers. These powers then use this society at will for their own interests.



The policy being pursued today in this context is based on very wrong intentions. The intention is to assimilate. The goal is to use the youth of these societies, that is, the youth's intelligence of the society, for the interests and power of certain states. They are not accepted into foreign countries to protect their rights. You mentioned in your question that a certain slogan has become popular: "We welcome refugees! We open our doors and welcome them to our country." But for the affected societies the situation is quite different.

Shortly after the start of IS attacks on the Êzîdî community on August 3, 2014, Ezidjan was completely surrounded. From Başîk and Bazan to Sinjar, all the Êzîdî villages in South Kurdistan were surrounded. A brutal and massive attack took place at that time. Tens of thousands of women and children were kidnapped by IS. Many people died of thirst at that time. The fate of about 3000 people is still unclear. Nobody knows if they are still alive. It is unclear where they were sold to. The powerful states of this world did not help the Êzîdî community at that time.

I would like to give a concrete example: There was, for example, the Êzîdî village of Koco. The entire village was surrounded by IS for ten days at that time. All the villagers were gathered by IS in the village school and they were told: 'If you deny your faith and become Muslims; that is, if you promise in front of the camera that you will give up your Êzîdî identity, leave your homeland, become Sunni Muslims and submit to the flag of the IS, then we will not kill you.' Some of the villagers trapped there managed to



secretly contact the outside world with their cell phones. They said: `If within 24 hours certain forces intervene and liberate us, we can stay alive. But if you do not liberate us, the IS will behead us all. They told us that we have to profess to become Muslims, but we refused. That is why they will kill us all.` But no one answered their call for help. The same villagers sent another message: `If you cannot save us, we have only one request: Send your planes and bomb the place where we are staying. Let them kill us and the IS fighters. Because under no circumstances do we want to fall into the hands of IS alive and deny our faith.`

At that time, powers like Germany, France, the US, England, Iraq and the South Kurdish government did not come to rescue them. Iraq and the South Kurdish government had previously betrayed the Êzîdîs and had fled from Sinjar. They also didn't bomb and kill Êzîdîs [in Koco village]. They simply did not help.

But for seven years now, this very same Êzîdî community has been resisting, with the most scant resources. Only the armed forces of our Freedom Movement, the People's Defense Forces HPG and the Free Women's Units YJA-Star, and the YPG/YPJ rushed to the aid of the Êzîdîs at that time. The self-defense forces of the Rojava self-administration intervened. At the same time, the HPG came to Sinjar from the free mountains of Kurdistan to help. Approximately 10,000 people also held out on Mount Sinjar. Shoulder to shoulder with the guerrilla, these people initiated a new phase and began to resist.



Step by step, they liberated the whole of Sinjar and its surroundings from IS despite their scarce resources. The people who held out on Mount Sinjar were subjected to an embargo by IS, as well as the KDP. For months they suffered from hunger and thirst on the mountain. Dozens of children died due to hunger and thirst. No one helped them. Yet the possibilities for providing help were ten times better then than they are now. The most modern technology was available to the various forces. With their resources, they could have sent food, water, weapons and soldiers. They could have helped. But they did not.

What did they do instead? Many people had entered Rojava via a corridor opened by the Freedom Movement and from there had moved on to South Kurdistan. Only there did certain people then become active. Under the slogan “We will take care of the refugees,” the KDP then demanded help from the aforementioned states. The help that was provided by these states was used by the KDP for itself and its own benefit.

Today, dozens of people still die in the refugee camps that were set up in South Kurdistan at that time. They take their own lives. Young women and men, but also old people. Every single day they face great dangers in these camps. Dozens of times their tents have burned down. Again and again they are put under massive pressure in the camps. But no one protests against this situation.

Therefore, the current policy regarding the Êzîdîs is wrong and immoral. It neither serves the interests of the Êzîdî



community nor is it in accordance with human rights. The only aim of this policy is to displace the Êzîdî community, to drive them out of their homeland, to bring them to the above-mentioned countries, to use them there like slaves and to use the energy of the youth of this society for themselves. Therefore, this policy regarding refugees is not in accordance with the principles of the UN. Anyway, the UN is an institution that was built by the mentioned states and is under their control. They use the UN for their own interests. Until today, the Êzîdîs have not been provided with the necessary assistance.

So far, more than 100,000 members of the Êzîdî society have returned to Sinjar and have organized themselves. They have established their own People's Council of the Democratic Self-Administration. This People's Council has now been active for seven years. A women's movement and a youth movement have also been established in Sinjar. Today there is an Êzîdî political party. There are numerous institutions such as the city administration, schools, cultural institutions and human rights institutions. The people of Sinjar are governing themselves today. They are the owners of Sinjar. They have given hundreds of martyrs until they reached the present level.

Whoever wants to support Sinjar today should help the Êzîdîs to stay in their homeland and to live there. So even more than material aid, helping them means recognizing the rights of the Êzîdî community, that is, their political right to autonomy. If the Êzîdîs had been self-determined, had been governing themselves and had been able to



defend themselves, the genocide in 2014 would not have happened. Then they would not have fled, but would have defended themselves and stayed in their land. There would not have been this huge pain and such a huge massacre would not have happened.

**In Sinjar, the local Êzîdî population has been building its own democratic self-administration for seven years now. At the same time, a large part of the Êzîdî community now lives abroad. What solution do you propose for the future of the Êzîdî community?**

In the form of the KCK, Reber Apo has developed a paradigm for the entire Middle East and all of humanity based on ecology, democracy and women's freedom. There are numerous peoples who have been excluded from the state system, whose beliefs and languages have been banned and whose existence has not been recognized in the slightest way. It is precisely these peoples who can express themselves and live in the KCK system. It is a democratic and communal system based on the idea of the Democratic Nation. With the philosophy of a free life and the paradigm of the Democratic Nation, all the peoples of the region can live together - without building a state, without only one language and one flag, and without only a small section being able to live in the country. As the KCK, we consider this the best solution for all societies. This is what we fight for.

Based on this ideology, idea and philosophy, we have therefore called on our Êzîdî community to return to their



country. In view of your question, I would like to repeat our call: A large part of the Êzîdî community has fled from Sinjar and is now living in camps in South Kurdistan, but also in Europe. In the course of the last 200 years, a certain number of Êzîdîs have also left for Armenia, Georgia, Russia, that is, for the Caucasus region. No matter where the Êzîdîs live today, their existence is closely connected to the sacred soil of Ezidxane. I call upon all of them to return to their homeland and build their own democratic society and democratic-communal self-administration there. They themselves must become the owners of their homeland, govern themselves, defend themselves, and sustain themselves based on their own economy. They have lived on their own earth for thousands of years. Today, they must return to it and live there. That is our proposed solution. We firmly believe that this is the most democratic and free solution, which provides the most equality for the whole society.

Especially the Êzîdî and Alevi communities are natural communities that are inseparable from the soil of Kurdistan. Therefore, I repeat once again: They can only manifest their own existence and defend it if they live in their homeland. If they leave their country, they will be assimilated and thus experience a huge loss. There are many examples for this in the past.

The women of Ezidxan, that is, the women of the Êzîdî community occupy a sacred and very significant place. For thousands of years, women in this community were considered partners for life. She has always occupied a





position in society that made everybody regard her as the force that solves social problems. In case of conflicts, people turned to the older women of the community. Their social role allowed women to develop ideas and solutions for existing problems. At the same time, she defended the language, culture and values of society. But the displacement robbed her of all this and the influence of other religions on the Êzîdîs increased enormously. Even today, we can see how despite the relatively small number of Êzîdîs who have remained in Ezidxane and Sinjar, the women and youth there have been leading Sinjar for seven years. When the women of Sinjar sensed the smell of freedom, they immediately started to actively participate.

We can see this already during the formation period of the Freedom Movement. As early as 1989, the young Êzîdî woman from North Kurdistan Binefş Agal, her other name is Bêrîvan, put up a heroic resistance, showed great willingness to sacrifice herself and fell as a martyr. Heval Bêrîvan thus became a symbol for all resistant and patriotic women of Kurdistan and for the return to the homeland. Heval Bêrîvan had also become acquainted with the Freedom Movement and the ideas of Rêber Apo in Europe and had decided to return to her homeland. Bêrîvan`s attitude represents the attitude of Êzîdîsm. It represents the decision to resist, to return to your homeland, to be self-sufficient and not to demand anything from anyone. For this very reason, the women of Sinjar today have built their own autonomous movement and institutions. With the Sinjar Women`s Units (YJŞ),



they have built their own self-defense force. Today, the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBŞ) and the YJŞ defend Sinjar.

At present, Sinjar is once again facing a huge threat. Because on October 9, 2020, an agreement regarding Sinjar was agreed upon by Iraq, the KDP and Turkey. With this, these forces have shown once again that they want to take Sinjar away from its population, break the will of Ezidxane, enslave the Êzîdîs, and bring them under their control. Therefore, they want to dissolve the self-defense forces and the People's Council of the Democratic Self-Administration in Sinjar. They want to destroy the women's autonomous institutions, the women's movement and the youth movement so that the Êzîdî community can be displaced once again.

Since October 9, 2020, Sinjar's society has been resisting against the Baghdad-Erbil deal. It is defending its institutions, its existence, its homeland, its holy sites, its martyrs and its values. Without this strong resistance, the October 9 agreement would have been implemented by now and all Êzîdîs would have been expelled from Ezidxan.

Therefore, all forces that stand up for human rights must put pressure on the states involved. In particular, European countries, the EU, the UN, and their civil society institutions. If they cannot help on the ground, then they must put pressure on certain states from the outside. Especially on the fascist and dictatorial regime of Erdogan and Bahceli. This regime pursues a policy of



genocide against all Kurds, especially against the Êzîdîs. The Turkish state has repeatedly attacked Sinjar in recent years. Numerous inhabitants of Sinjar have been murdered by the bombs of Turkish fighter jets. Pressure must be put on this regime to stop its attacks on Sinjar and Êzîdxane. Pressure must also be exerted on the KDP and its narrow-minded regional policy, which cares about nothing but the interests of its own party. The Iraqi state must also pay its debt for not doing its duty during the genocide in 2014. It can do so by recognizing that Sinjar is autonomous and democratic, that it belongs to the people of Sinjar, and that it develops its own solutions.

Our Freedom Movement, the KCK and also the ideas, philosophy and leadership of Rêber Apo have contributed greatly to the fact that Êzîdîsm has found its place in humanity today. Today, the Êzîdîs can clearly say: “We exist.” We serve our society. We will defend and take care of our society. This is necessary so that our community can finally exist as part of the mosaic in the Middle East. Because Kurdistan without Sinjar, Sinjar without Ezidxan and the Middle East without these original, ancient societies are unimaginable. All those who want to provide support must take these facts into account and act accordingly. Thus, one can take new steps. Those who take this into account and act accordingly can become a source of solutions.

Then all Êzîdî refugees who are currently not living in their homeland will also be able to return and live here. I would like to repeat my call once again: Freedom, equality



and democracy can only be achieved under the leadership of woman on the sacred soil of a free Sinjar. Our people have the necessary willpower and knowledge. Today, the Sinjar of 2014 is a thing of the past. Now, in 2021, Sinjar possesses the idea of freedom and an enormous amount of knowledge. Sinjar will defend its values. The Êzîdî community will live a free life based on its own values on this sacred earth as long as the Kurds, Kurdistan and the Middle East exist.



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