The presence of Kurds outside the geographical boundaries of Kurdistan proper or the Middle East in general is a recent phenomenon, if we compare them with other peoples of the Middle East like the Armenians, Assyrians/Syriacs, and the Lebanese who maintained a tradition of emigration to Africa, Europe and the Americas from the second half of the Nineteenth Century. Some due to religious persecution and others due to economic reasons.

The Kurdish presence abroad can be divided into three distinct periods, namely:

1- Prior to the Second World War; that was characterised by a small group of individuals that were carrying-out sporadic cultural and political activities.

2- After the Second World War to 1965; that was characterised by the influx of the first groups of students in moderate numbers to different European universities from different parts of Kurdistan.

3- After 1965 to the present; that is characterised by the large movement of Kurds abroad as workers, refugees and students.

In the period preceding the Second World War, there were rudimentary activities by individuals or small groups of Kurds in the cultural and political fields abroad, that were mainly

* This paper was presented to a meeting of the "Kurdistan Week" that was arranged by the " Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt " in West Berlin between 17-22 December, 1989.
concentrated around different members of the Bedirkhan family whether in Beirut, Cairo, Lausanne, Portsmouth or St. Petersborg in the form of publishing newspapers (Kurdistan and Hawar), magazines and books in the kurdish language or about the Kurds, or opening schools in the Kurdish language like the first ever modern school in the kurdish language by Abdulrazzaq Badirkhan with the help of the Russians on 22nd October, 1913 in Khoy in Iranian Kurdistan for 29 Kurdish students that was supported by Ismail Agha Simko, (1) or raising the kurdish issue in international forums and institutions like the League of Nations and Socialist International, or forming cultural and political associations or parties e.g. Khoybun (independence) party and the Centre of Kurdish Studies in Paris.

The other centre of activity was a group of kurdish students from the Othoman state studying in Lausanne - Switzerland, around 1913, that founded a branch of the kurdish association "Hévi" (hope), the youth and student organisation in Constantinople, there, and were carrying different cultural and political activities. (2)

The third group was the one that was centered around the Society for the Resurection of Kurdistan, that was all Kurdish, that dispatched Sharif Pasha of Sulaimania to represent them at the Peace Conference after the First World War in 1920. (3)

Isolated booklets and reports continued to be published by different political personalities in exile like the memorandum to the Peace Conference in San Francisco in 1945 and the reports on genocidal practices by Turkey in the kurdish uprisings in Ararat and Dersim by the Bedirkhans but these did
not expand and remained very contained in very small groups of people. (4)

Cultural activities during this period were concentrated to publications of books and magazines, on a small scale, or the translation of Kurdish poems and fables (folk tales) as well as helping European researchers e.g. anthropologists and linguists. (5)

During the second period, from the Second World War to 1975, nearly all Kurdish political and cultural activity abroad and especially in Europe was centered around the Kurdish Students' Society in Europe (KSSE), that was established in 1956 in Wiesbaden in West Germany by 17 Kurdish students from all parts of Kurdistan and studying in different countries in Europe. (6) Earlier, in 1949, there were two attempts at establishing such a Kurdish student organisation in Beirut and Paris but did not succeed. They disappeared after a year or two of activities. (7)

The Society was publishing magazines in Kurdish and European languages, participating in international youth and student festivals, arranging cultural evenings, acting as diplomatic representatives for the Kurdish movements inside Kurdistan, and helping newly arrived Kurdish students by providing them with guidance and services.

In the initial stages, membership was small in the student organisation due to the small number of Kurdish students studying in Europe. The majority were from Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan, with few individual members from Iranian and Turkish Kurdistan. They usually had their social origins in upper middle-class or very rich aristocratic families because
they were studying on their own private accounts. Very few of them had governmental scholarships.

With the revolution of 1958 in Iraq, that toppled the royalist regime there, and the recognition of some kurdish political and cultural rights, the number of kurdish students on governmental scholarships, to different eastern and western european countries, increased considerably which gave great financial and numerical strength to the organisation. It gradually gained international recognition as well and received student scholarships from different european countries that were granted to kurdish students from Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. All through the period, however, membership of kurdish students from Iraq, in the first place, and Syria, coming second, dominated the organisation. This tendency continued until 1975. While the social profile of the students changed from the upper to the middle and lower-middle classes, with some even from peasant backgrounds. The number of male students dominated. Few female students were, then, sent abroad for individual studies from most Middle-Eastern societies due to traditional norms and values.

The situation of dominance of kurdish students from Iraq and Syria in the ranks of KSSE can be attributed to the following factors:

1- Greater development of the kurdish areas in these two countries, especially of the economy and the educational system, during that period.

2- Better relative democratic and political freedoms existing in these two countries during these decades, especially in the fifties.
3- Greater contact between these countries and European ones such as England, in the case of Iraq, and France, in the case of Syria, as ex-mandatory powers. While such relations were lacking with Iran and Turkey.

4- Governmental support and scholarships to students on a large-scale in Iraq after 1958.

With the start of the Kurdish armed-resistance movement for autonomy in Iraqi Kurdistan, in Sept. 1961, KSSE turned into every thing but a student organisation. All its activities became political and diplomatic for the movement. It concentrated on publicising the movement, organising protest opinion meetings, solidarity work, collecting and dispatching humanitarian aid. The same type of activities were carried on behalf of the Kurdish movements in other parts of Kurdistan as well, but to a lesser extent.

The members were enthusiastically engaged in these activities. They all identified with the movement in Iraqi Kurdistan. The dominance of political and diplomatic activities can also be attributed to the fact that the majority of the members were already members of political organisations inside Kurdistan. Those that were independent were also gradually recruited into the ranks of different political organisations.

In general, it can be asserted that the oppression that is practiced against the Kurdish people and the state of the struggle for their freedom and ethnic and cultural identity, more or less, compels even the most neutral Kurdish interest-group organisation to be engaged in the political struggle and acquire a character different from similar interest-group organisations in other more peaceful and democratic societies.
During this period, KSSE, apart from its political and diplomatic activities was organising yearly Newroz (national Day and kurdish New Year) celebrations in all the countries that it had branches and published two cultural magazines "Chiya -Mountain" in Northern Kurmanji (kurdish) and "Pirshing" in Southern Kurmanji (kurdish). It was also publishing a magazine in English called "Kurdistan".

KSSE grew from a membership of seventeen (17) in 1956 to nearly 3000 in 1975, with branches in most European countries. A sister organisation was also established in the United States, in the 1960’s, called "Kurdish Students Association". KSSE also had sympathisers and contact persons among kurdish immigrants in Australia and an underground branch among kurdish students from Iraq and Syria studying at different universities in Turkey. They were uncovered and jailed for more than one year in 1963.

Unfortunately, with the crisis of the kurdish movement in Iraq and its collapse in 1975, the student movement was split into two organisations: KSSE and AKSA, and later on (1978) these split into two more organisations. Other student organisations were also formed e.g. NUKSE later SOKSE and YUKSE. (8) This development seriously weakened the activities of the kurdish community abroad and student organisations in general. In 1988, most of these organisations agreed on uniting their ranks and forming a new and united kurdish student organisation but have failed so far to work energetically towards that aim.(9) The structure of the kurdish community abroad has changed radically so that a student organisation cannot fulfil the role and functions that it played in the earlier decades.
From 1965 and onwards, a process of change in the structure of Kurdish presence abroad began to take form. Namely, the coming of Kurdish workers en masse from Turkey, especially to the Federal Republic of Germany and then to Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France and Sweden. The dominance of young and single Kurdish students from Iraq and Syria began to give way to this new presence by the beginning of the 1970's. Although, the workers, initially, were not politically active, they were gradually drawn into forming joint student and workers associations in many European cities. Some even joined the student associations. Others were drawn into the trade union movement in their host countries. This gave them organisational insights and competence to form their own organisations after 1975. Organisations that were more concerned with their problems as immigrants and workers although they participated in the solidarity work in support of the liberation movement in Kurdistan. (10)

Initially, the social profile of the workers, too, was that they were young and single but of older age-groups in comparison with the students. They were mainly from agrarian backgrounds and mostly came from areas outside the geographical boundaries of Kurdistan proper like Konya or from urbanised centres in Turkey e.g. Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, etc. In other words, they already had the migratory experience of leaving Kurdistan in seek of employment. Therefore, their migration to certain European countries was not as problematic as for other immigrant groups.

The collapse of the Kurdish movement in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1975 and the massive deportation campaigns of Kurds in Iraq that followed in 1977 and onwards together with the new armed
movement, there, led to a wave of refugee families to seek asylum in different European countries. The workers, too, who initially had come alone and were aiming to return after few years in a host country realised the difficulty of fulfilling their dreams and started to take their families to get united with them in the countries of immigration. The war in Iranian Kurdistan that was imposed upon the Kurds by the clerical regime in 1979, in Iran, together with the war between Iran and Iraq that started in Sept. 1980 led to another wave of massive refugee family movements by the Kurds to neighbouring and European countries. The military coup, in Sept. 1980, also led to a large exodus of Kurdish refugees from Turkey. The movement of Kurds from Syria of students, workers and refugees has remained modest and limited compared to other parts of Kurdistan. The movement of Kurds from the Soviet Union has been non-existent, although there are tendencies towards a new development.(11) The Kurds from Lebanon have only recently started to seek refuge in different European countries.

The following differences can be observed between the earlier presence of Kurds abroad and that after 1965:

1- Numerically, there has been a drastic increase in the number of Kurds abroad, from a mere approximate (2000) to nearly half a million (500,000).(12)

2- The period before 1965 was dominated by student activists while the later period is a more mixed picture of workers, refugees and students.

3- Before 1965, all activity (cultural and political) was concentrated in a single student organisation. While after 1965, there was a very clear increase and diversification of
unions, associations, clubs, cultural centres and political organisations.

4- Before 1965, the Kurds from Iraq and then from Syria were in the majority among the Kurds in Europe, but now the Kurds from Turkey constitute the majority followed by the Kurds from Iraq and then Iran and lastly Syria.

5- Before 1965, the Kurds in Europe were mainly composed of young and single men who aimed at return after concluding their studies. In the period after 1965, the number of women and children has considerably increased within the group. Their age and social profiles have also changed. The dream of return has become more out-distant and difficult to realise.

6- The period before 1965 was characterised by unity of action, enthusiasm and hope for the fulfilment of their aspirations. The period after 1965 experienced a number of serious setbacks, divisions and conflicts within the Kurdish movement. But there are tendencies, now, towards a new unity.

These radical changes in the social and political structure as well as the number of Kurds abroad has led to a number of marked differences in the political and cultural activities of the Kurds abroad. Among these we can mention:

I- A marked increase in the number of Kurdish organisations, associations, clubs in most major European cities and towns.

II- A marked increase in the level and diversification of Kurdish representations (whether diplomatic or political) and the dissemination of their political and informational messages and policies in different European languages. A complex situation has developed sparked by the forced refuge of some of the organisations in exile and that is
characterised by numerosity and confusion in the receiving countries, but in fact reflecting the actual division of Kurdistan into four parts and the diversification of political organisations in Kurdistan.

III- Concentration on cultural activities along political ones e.g. the establishment of cultural centres in different countries such as Britain, France, West Germany, Belgium, Holland, Austria, USA, etc. The arrangement of folk festivals, concerts, music and dance competitions, and Kurdistan weeks.

IV- A marked increase in literary activities, in the publication of newspapers, magazines and books, in an atmosphere of freedom and absence of censorship and persecution. To take only one example from Sweden:

Between 1977-Oct.1989, 69 titles (books) in Kurdish received financial support from the Swedish Cultural Board for publication.

Between 1983-Oct. 1989, 165 titles did not succeed in receiving financial support from the same board. (13)

These figures are only for literary works and only in Sweden from 1977-1989. A similar movement can be observed in Britain, West Germany, France and Holland. Kurdish publishing houses, print shops and bookshops are being established in most of these countries. It would be very tedious to list the names of all these newspapers, magazines, publishing houses and bookshops. These publications are mainly in the main two dialects (some even in Zaza). A Kurdish Writers Union and branches of Kurdish Pen Club have been established by Kurdish authors abroad.
V- A visible increase in the number of Kurdish interest-group organisations for physicians, artists, musicians, lawyers, workers, women, students, sports and social clubs, etc. in most European countries.

VI- Arrangement of periodic meetings and conferences on human rights in Kurdistan like in Bremen, Paris, London, Lausanne, Florence and Stockholm, as well as collecting humanitarian aid for Kurdish refugees in the Middle East.(14)

VII- An increased level of activities in scientific research on Kurdish issues and problems in different disciplines and fields.

VIII- A marked increase in the level of activities in solidarity actions and support for the struggle in Kurdistan with the peoples of the host countries and a noticeable increase in Kurdish participation in the political and electoral processes in the host countries.

IX- Concentration on issues connected with the Kurdish migrants' situation e.g. information, ethnic support, mother-tongue education, literacy campaigns and opening of schools and nurseries for Kurdish children.(15)

X- Finally, an increased level of contact and cooperation as well as coordination between different Kurdish political movements from different parts of Kurdistan. (16)

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NOTES
(2) Ibid, p. 99, and in : Silopi, Zinar : "Fi Sabil Kurdistan - Mudhakarat " ( For Kurdistan - Memoires ), Translation from Kurdish into Arabic by "Kawa Association of Kurdish Culture ", Dar Al-katib, Beirut. 1987. p. 28. Zinar Silopi is a pseudonym for the late "Qadri Jamil Pasha".

(3) In Silopi, pp. 56-67. The Society was called "The Society for the Resurrection of Kurdistan" and had its main seat in Constantinople (Istanbul). Its membership was from southern and northern Kurdistan (today’s Syria, Iraq and Turkey). The first council of the Society was composed of the following persons:

1- President of the Council: Seyid Abdul-Qadir, son of Sheikh Ubeidullah, member of the Othoman Senate.

2- First Vice-president: Bedirkhan Amin Ali av Botan.

3- Second Vice-president: Farik Fuad Pasha from Sulaimani, son of an ex-foreign minister of the Othoman State.

4- General Secretary: The retired general Farik Hamdi Pasha, from Southern Kurdistan.

5- Cashier: Seyid Abdulla av Shamdinan, son of Seyid Abdul-Qadir.

The other members of the Council were: Colonel Khamil Beg; Ali Bedi‘khan; the retired officer Mohamed Amin Zaki; Khojah Ali Efendi; Professor Shafiq Efendi; Shukri Babanzade (Editor of the newspaper Terjuman); Fuad Babanzade; Fathullah Efendi; and Professor Shukri Mohamed Sekban.

Sharif Pasha himself was an ex-ambassador of the Othoman State and he was from Sulaimani in Southern Kurdistan.

(4) e.g. :


(5) I am thinking, here, of such orientalists as : Marr; Orbil; Vilchevsky; Jaba; Minorsky; Nikitine; Lescot; Leach; Rambot; Bois; Rondot; Sykes; Mann; etc. Rich, Soane and Edmonds belong to another category of orientalists.

(6) See Fuad, Kemal : "Komala u Rékkhirawa Kuriyekan le Ewropa " (Kurdish Associations and Organizations in Europe). Kurdistan Students Union, Sulaimani Branch, 1972.

(7) Fuad, Kemal : "30 Sal Komalay Khwéndkaran 1956-1986 " (30 Years Student Society 1956-1986). An article in the Kurdish organ of the Association of Kurdistan Students Abroad (AKSA) "Pirshing" to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Kurdish Students’ Society in Europe (KSSE), on 16/8-1986.
The organization in Beirut lasted only few months and was established in 1948. The main initiative taker was the late Dr. Noureddin Zaza.

The organization in Paris was established in 1949 and lasted for more than a year. Among the founders were: Noureddin Zaza, Ismet Cherif Vanly, Abdulla Qadir, and Shawkat Akrawi. According to the late Dr. Zaza, the late Dr. A.R. Ghassemloiu and his brother Ahmed also participated in the meeting in Paris, but they opposed the formation of such a separate Kurdish student organization because their party "the Iranian Tudeh Party" was opposed to such an initiative.

(8) "NUKSE" stands for "National Union of Kurdish Students in Europe". "SOKSE" stands for "Socialist Kurdish Students in Europe". And "YUKSE" stands for "Youth and Kurdish Students in Europe".

(9) The new united student organization was called "KSSE" but instead of "Kurdish Students' Society in Europe" it was called "Kurdistan Students Society in Europe".

(10) Among such workers associations, one can mention "KOMKAR", "Mala Gelé Kurd", "Koch-Kar" and the associations of Kurdish workers in many western European countries including the "Federation of Kurdish Societies in Sweden".

(11) The Kurds residing in Armenia and Azerbaijan were affected by the ethnic strife in both republics. Some 10,000 Kurds were sent for resettlement in Kazakhstan. The Kurds of Georgia were worried about their future in an atmosphere of elated georgian nationalism. Some Kurds were persecuted in Azerbaijan because they supported the Armenians in Nagorno Karabagh, while other Kurds were persecuted in Nakhchechivan in Armenia because they were of Muslim origin.

The Kurds of the Soviet Union, that is estimated to be ca. one million according to Professor N. Nadirov, have formed a joint committee to present their demands for the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish area, similar to the one that existed until 1929 but was abolished by Stalin and thousands of Kurds were deported and dispersed in different Central Asian Republics.

Recently, some Kurdish emissaries were sent by the Kurds in the Soviet Union to Sweden and France to enquire about the possibilities of emigrating to Western European countries, Canada, the United States, Australia or to a part of Kurdistan, if their situation worsens and they continue to be denied the right of recognition as a separate ethnic group in the Soviet Union.

(12) The distribution of the Kurds abroad is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Approx. Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>10,000-12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>8,000-10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>10,000-12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>20,000-30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Eastern Europe</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRG</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are also smaller numbers of Kurdish exiles in the Gulf states, Latin America, Africa, Spain and Italy.

For the source of these figures, that are mainly estimations, see: Sheikhmous (1988): "The Kurds in Exile", in the Yearbook of the Kurdish Academy, Nr.1, 1990.

(13) These are based on official statistics of the Swedish Cultural Board. The author is a member of a working group on minority and immigrant litterature with the same board.

Among the Kurdish publishing companies in Sweden, one can mention:

Orfeus; APEC; BERGEH; Hangaw; Publishing House of Kurdistan; Haykurd; Helebje; Kocher; Kurdiska Kultur Förlaget; PIYA; Roja Nu; SARA; Jina Nu; Shilan; Tara Sätteri; Vejin; Weshanén Welat.

(14) Most Kurdish communities abroad have actively organised campaigns for collecting funds in aid of Kurdish refugees in Iran, Iraq and Turkey in the form of financial assistance, school books, medicines, and toys for children. They have also organised a number of joint aid projects with many humanitarian organizations for the refugees e.g. Red Cross societies, Save the Children Funds, and Physicians without borders, etc.

(15) Official and voluntary Kurdish classes and nurseries have been opened in Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom and West Germany. Projects for opening such schools in Holland and Canada are also in progress.

(16) Periodic meetings of consultation and coordination take place. An embryo coordination committee has been established and plans for a joint Kurdistan Human Rights Committee between the movements from different parts of Kurdistan have been worked-out.