

Dear Sir, *Sheehan*

The British Kurdish Friendship Society would like to enlist the support of all ~~the~~ <sup>3</sup> ~~groups~~ in Britain, irrespective of their political allegiances, in a joint approach to the GLC requesting help in setting up a Kurdish cultural centre in London. We enclose a copy of an appeal we have drafted, and if you are in agreement would like you to sign it and return it to us. If an appoint<sup>ment</sup> could be arranged to discuss this with Ken Livingstone, then it will be necessary for us to meet and select a delegation for the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Sir,

We are writing to you to request your assistance in setting up a cultural centre in London for the Kurds, similar to the one the French Government has helped establish in Paris.

You're probably well aware of the background to the Kurds - the fact that they number between 18 and 20 million, and that they are mainly divided amongst Iraq, Iran and Turkey, countries which vehemently and violently dispute their legitimacy as a ~~people~~<sup>nationality</sup> with a distinct culture and history of their own.

Because of the inaccessibility of Kurdistan, it is little known that the Kurds ~~in numerical terms at least, have a greater refugee problem than even the Palestinians.~~ <sup>have a very serious refugee problem</sup> In Iran, for example, some 20,000 Kurds have died since 1979 when Khomeini mobilised his ~~people~~<sup>forces</sup> against the Kurdish people. Hundreds of towns and villages have been destroyed and an estimated 25,000 made homeless. In Iraq, the Government has forcibly resettled some 300,000 Kurds living near the borders with Turkey and Iran and moved them from the mountains to the arid south and centre of the country. Because of the Gulf War, and the loosening hold of the Iraqi Army on Kurdistan, tens of thousands are moving back to their original homes where they now live in desperate circumstances. In Turkey, the authorities are also trying to construct a free-fire zone along the border with Iraq and Iran and have started to move out Kurdish families.

In all these countries, the Kurds are regarded as uncomfortable minorities - to be put down and kept in place. Access to these regions for reporters is extremely difficult, as the Governments concerned are not interested in publicising the Kurdish plight, ~~for obvious reasons.~~

So far, the Kurds have refused to resort to international terrorism to draw attention to their cause. Yet, there is an increasing sense of frustration among Kurds living in Europe about the conditions under which the suffering Kurdish community in the Middle East is forced to exist. We feel a real need to inform the outside world about our people, and to look after the ethnic interests of Kurdish refugees living in Britain.

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For this reason, we would like to discuss with you whether the GLC would be prepared to help us - for example, by providing premises and even contributing towards the funding of such a cultural centre.

We look forward to hearing whether an appointment can be arranged to develop this further.

Yours sincerely,