

# Fire, Snow and Honey

*Voices from Kurdistan*

Edited by Gina Lennox

With a foreword by Madame Danielle Mitterrand

Hardback, 677 pages

23 Black and White photos/illustrations

Published by Halstead Press, Sydney, 2001

One of three books shortlisted for the NSW Premier General History Award, 2002

*Fire, Snow and Honey* is a landmark book. For the first time Kurdish men and women aged between 23 and 103 describe their history, culture and life experiences: their religions, literature, legends, poetry, music, dancing, cooking, genocide and armed struggles, as well as what it is like to become a refugee.

## **Kurdistan**

Kurdistan is the land of Noah and Abraham, through which the old Silk Road passed. It is a land of giant mountains and waterfalls, ancient forests and famous rivers, of ritual fire, winter snows and liquid gold, rich in agriculture, petrol and water. In 1923, it was carved up by the League of Nations to form the nation-states of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Ever since the Kurdish people, numbering between 30 and 40 million, have been subject to genocide.

*Fire Snow and Honey* mixes academic essays and life stories of freedom fighters and soldiers, mothers and musicians, doctors, teachers and scholars, villagers and city people, with poetry, fables and short fiction, to lift many veils of secrecy, some of which never before published.

## **Genocide**

Foremost is a genocide that has rendered tens of millions of Kurds homeless. Since 1975 an estimated 10,000 villages have been destroyed, over half a million Kurds have 'disappeared', hundreds of thousands have been imprisoned for their political beliefs, some for just speaking the word 'Kurd', and over eight million have been deported, their crops and animals destroyed. *Fire, Snow and Honey* portrays the humanity behind these statistics, and the costs of oppression, terror and armed struggle.

## **Origin of monotheism and Indo-European language and civilisation**

Veils are also lifted on the origins of the three great monotheistic religions, and on the beginnings of the Indo-European languages and civilisations. The reader will learn of the little known religions of Ezidism, Alevism and Zoroaster, and how they impacted on Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all of which are practised by Kurds.

## **International Politics**

By rewriting history from the Kurdish point of view, both ancient and modern, *Fire, Snow and Honey* challenges common interpretations of international events, and shows how these are interwoven with the Kurdish predicament. Contributors describe

how the Iran-Iraqi War is a direct outcome of stopping the Kurdish revolution in northern Iraq, and the no-fly zone in northern Iraq, where for the first time in the modern era Kurds have governed themselves since 1991, is a direct outcome of the battle over Kuwait. As for the future, *Fire, Snow & Honey* describes how Kurdistan will continue to play a vital role in the region, for it is the source of water for all the nation states now ruling it.

### **Literature and Poetry**

The poetry, legends and fables of the Kurds are amplified in the poetry interspersed between the essays and life stories and the Kurdish proverbs used as titles of many contributions. Thus readers will become acquainted with ‘He who does not fight has a sharp sword’, ‘Grass does not stay under a rock’, ‘Words are your own until they leave your mouth’, ‘The eye can see but the hand is short’, ‘See the mother, know the girl’ and ‘Blood cannot be washed with blood’.

### **Culture**

The culture of loyalty and hospitality, of family and village life is celebrated but counterpointed by descriptions of strict rules of community acceptability and decades of armed struggle and often violent death, including that by chemical bombing. Honest accounts by Kurdish women break another barrier of secrecy, including their experiences of circumcision, virginity tests and ‘honour punishments’.

### **Counteracting stereotypes of the Middle East**

While *Fire, Snow & Honey* describes Kurdish perspectives, it also informs anyone who wants to understand the multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious nature of the region and how people of different ethnic, religious or political persuasions are routinely imprisoned, tortured and killed, as is anyone who dares talk of democracy, human rights or freedom of the media. In Madame Mitterrand’s foreword and Gina Lennox’s introduction, it is explained why the Kurdish situation should concern us all, particularly in regards to supporting democracy, wherever it may manifest.

### **Comments from readers:**

‘*Fire, Snow & Honey - Voices from Kurdistan*’ is like no other book dealing with the subjects of Kurds and Kurdistan. It is therefore destined to be a seminal work and a reference book for both the beginner and the experienced... The book aims (and I believe surpasses all reasonable expectations in achieving its aim) at letting Kurdish voices, long silenced at home and ignored abroad, be heard. Eziz Bawermend

Congratulations on your book...It has certainly had a profound effect on me and makes me wonder what our role can be in either making life a bit easier for Kurds in Australia or giving support to the struggle for freedom from suppression in Kurdistan. Judith Turley

### **To order:**

*Fire, Snow & Honey* is retailing in Australian bookshops for \$59.95, and in the USA it is available through Washington University Press.

However it is also available by direct order at a considerable discount: \$50 per book, which includes GST and postage within Australia, and \$75 outside Australia.

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To order directly, please send a cheque or postal money order in AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS made payable to Gina Lennox along with the person's name and postal address to whom the book is to be sent, to:

Gina Lennox

46 William St, Redfern NSW 2016.

Otherwise inquire by e mail: [kurdconference@optusnet.com.au](mailto:kurdconference@optusnet.com.au)

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