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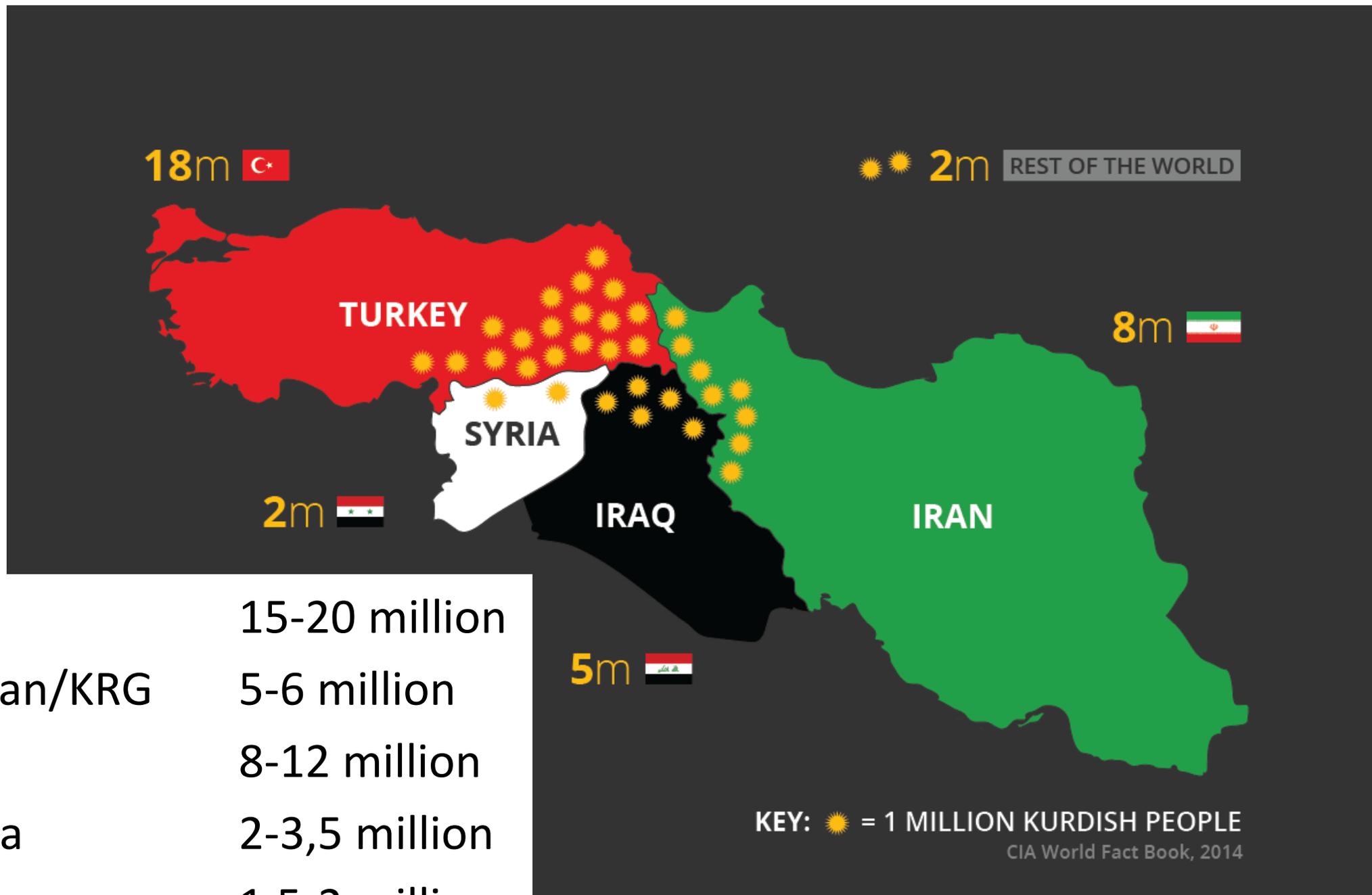
Kurdish migration. What are the latest developments and how does gender matter?



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Illustration: Colourbox



- Turkey 15-20 million
- Iraqi Kurdistan/KRG 5-6 million
- Iran 8-12 million
- Pre-war Syria 2-3,5 million
- Europe 1,5-2 million

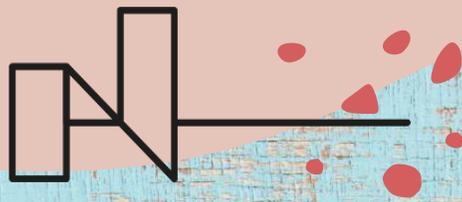
Illustration: The Kurdish Project

# Kurds in Europe



800 000 – 1.5 mil. in Germany  
150 000 – 200 000 in France  
80 000 – 100 000 in Sweden  
80 000 – 100 000 in UK  
70 000 – 100 000 in Holland  
15 000 – 50 000 in Belgium

Photographer: Iffit Qureshi  
Norway 2019  
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**The Exodus Prompted by  
Migration in Southern Kurdistan**  
*Vulnerability & Empowerment of Women*

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**Kaziwa Salih, Jagiellonian University**

*UNHCR: the global forced displacement has surpassed 84 million at mid-2021*

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**Kurdistan Region/Iraq**

**280,000 refugees**

**83,643km<sup>2</sup>**

**4 million population**

**Turkey**

**3.6 million refugees**

**783,356 km<sup>2</sup>**

**84.34 million population**

# **Major Causes of Migration to & from Kurdistan**

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1. Security and War Conflicts
  2. Political and/or religious Sectarianism
  3. Dictatorship & Human Rights Violations
  4. Economic Sustainability/ Crisis
  5. Job opportunities/ unemployment
  6. Political instability
  7. Natural Disasters /Climate Changes
  8. personal development
  9. Arabization and Geopolitical Changes
  10. Fascination with the West
  11. Overpopulation

# Overpopulation

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- Before 2014, Iraq already had one of the largest internally displaced populations in the world, at up to an estimated 1.3 million.
- According to UNHCR Iraq As of 31 August 2021, 248,721 Syrian refugees, and 37,798 refugees of other nationalities resided across Iraq, with over 98% of them located in the Kurdistan Region (KRI).
- Since 2015, there is 400.000 Yazidi displaced individuals in the Duhok camps.
- Arbat refugee camp. Originally built for 5000 displaced people. Has grown and is home to over 20.000 people.
- 13000 families from Rojhelat / Kurdistan of Iran.
- The country is highly prone to floods, landslides, and droughts. In 2020, 1200 families from south.

# *Economic Crisis*

## **international organization for migration, UN migration**

- Higher incidence of economic vulnerabilities is recorded among the displaced camp population:
- 14% of households are female-headed
- 15% mentally or physically challenged
- 57% the head of household are jobless.
- Two new forms of economic crisis: 1- High unemployment rate. Syrian refugees/ under wage

## **Income Rate**

- **2- Kurdistan's financial system is a "rentier economy" with two-thirds of households on the public payroll**
- 87% of households have a monthly income of less than 1,000,000 ID(\$850 US)
- Nearly 36% of households have a monthly income of less than 500,000 (IQD).
- over 51% an average monthly income of 500,000 – 1,000,000 IQD with severe poverty
- 13% of households earn over 1,000,000 IQD per month.
- The Iraqi Gov. put financial restrictions on Kurdistan (17 percent of the national budget)

# *Vulnerability & Empowerment of Women*

## *pros*

- Diverse and more open culture
- Occupied the realm of entrepreneurship and small enterprise.

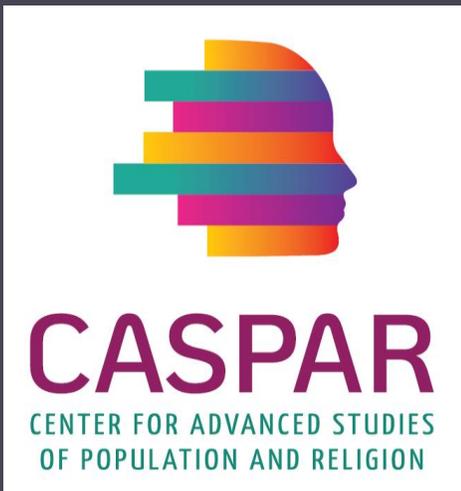
supermarket, design, carwash services, profit organization, Bakery, Gas station, sewing shops, Restaurants, Café, handcraft, .

- Religious Freedom: for women from Iran, religious minorities from Iran
- Women Agency

## *cons*

- Sexual Violence: 3,000 Yazidis are being held in slavery.
- 20% widowed women in the 20 to 24 age group to 94% in the over 65 age. With no social security.
- 75% of working women are in Public sector/ pay roll. Not receiving their salaries





# Internal Migration waves in Turkey and their impact on Kurdish migration

Karol Kaczorowski, PhD

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Cracow University of Economics, Poland

AlcitFEM – NCN Project funded by Norway Grants



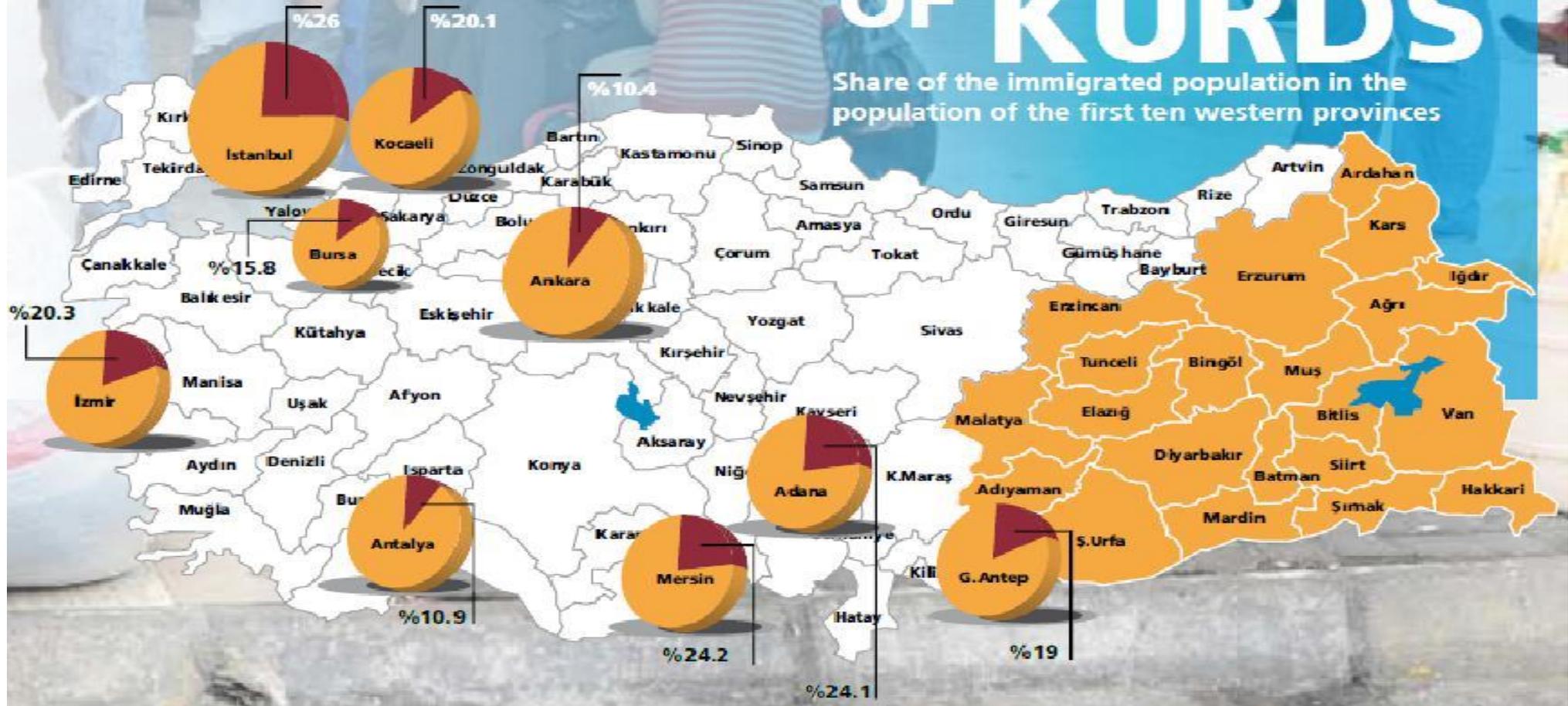
# *Internal migration waves in Turkey*

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1923-1949 | Low urbanization, deportations connected to Kurdish uprisings   |
| 1950-1959 | Voluntary migration, steady industrialization and urbanization  |
| 1960-1979 | Intensive industrialization and urbanization, voluntary migration and the rise of <i>gecekondus</i>               |
| 1980-2001 | Forced migration due to struggle with PKK, resettlement policy  |
| 2002-2015 | Economic and educational migration, economic growth   |
| 2015+     | Military operations in Northern Kurdistan, Turkish „war on terror” and economic instability due to high inflation |



# IMMIGRATION OF KURDS

Share of the immigrated population in the population of the first ten western provinces



Source: Mustafa Sönmez - Hürriyet Daily News 2013

# *Waves of migration in Turkey and Kurds*

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- ▶ Migration can be treated as a result of environment of human insecurity (Sirkeci 2006)
- ▶ Internal Kurdish migration is just as multi-step as international migration is
- ▶ Intersectional consequences for Kurdish Women
- ▶ Returns in 21st century and new forced migration from 2015 onwards





# *Motivations of Kurdish women to leave Syria during the war*

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Wendelmoet Hamelink, PhD

UiO Centre for Gender Research

ALCITfem project funded by Norway Grants



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# *Kurdish women's reasons for migration*

*Based on 21 life-story interviews and  
long-term research contact*

Aspirations to stay

Circular migration

Moral justifications

War as a lawless space



## *Aspirations to stay*

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Decision-making process: staying or leaving?

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Loss of close-knit family life

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Loss of material investments (house, shop, business)

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Loss of immaterial investments (education, social and cultural capital)

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Loss of life goals and status (political activism, importance in community)





# *Circular migration*

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Most interviewees traveled back and forth between Syrian cities and the countryside

And between Turkey, Lebanon and Syria

Often for several years

Before finally arriving in Scandinavia

Because they thought that they would continue to live in Syria



# *Refugee journey*

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Undertaken by a Kurdish family with three young children before leaving to Europe





## *Moral justifications*

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Many women talked in moral terms about the decision to leave:

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-Staying or leaving needed to be acceptable for the family and community

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-Traveling needed to be done under accompaniment of a relative

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-Country of arrival preferably close to relatives and community members





## *War as a lawless space*

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Political activists, already under pressure before the war, now under more threat

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The war enables powerful individuals to misuse their power (impunity)

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Fear for militia recruiting family members (women and men)

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Higher threat of sexual violence. Being imprisoned understood as rape

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Enabled by the war, people can do things usually unacceptable by community. This sometimes creates opportunities for women





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## *Conclusion*

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Most women tried everything to stay and keep their pre-war family and working life together

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Because of aspirations to stay: pattern of circular migration before leaving for good

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Women framed leaving in moral terms, acceptable to family and community

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The lawless space of war led to increased danger and was an important reason to leave, but sometimes also created opportunities

# Polish (EU) Border Crisis in Autumn 2021

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difficult experience of  
Kurdish women



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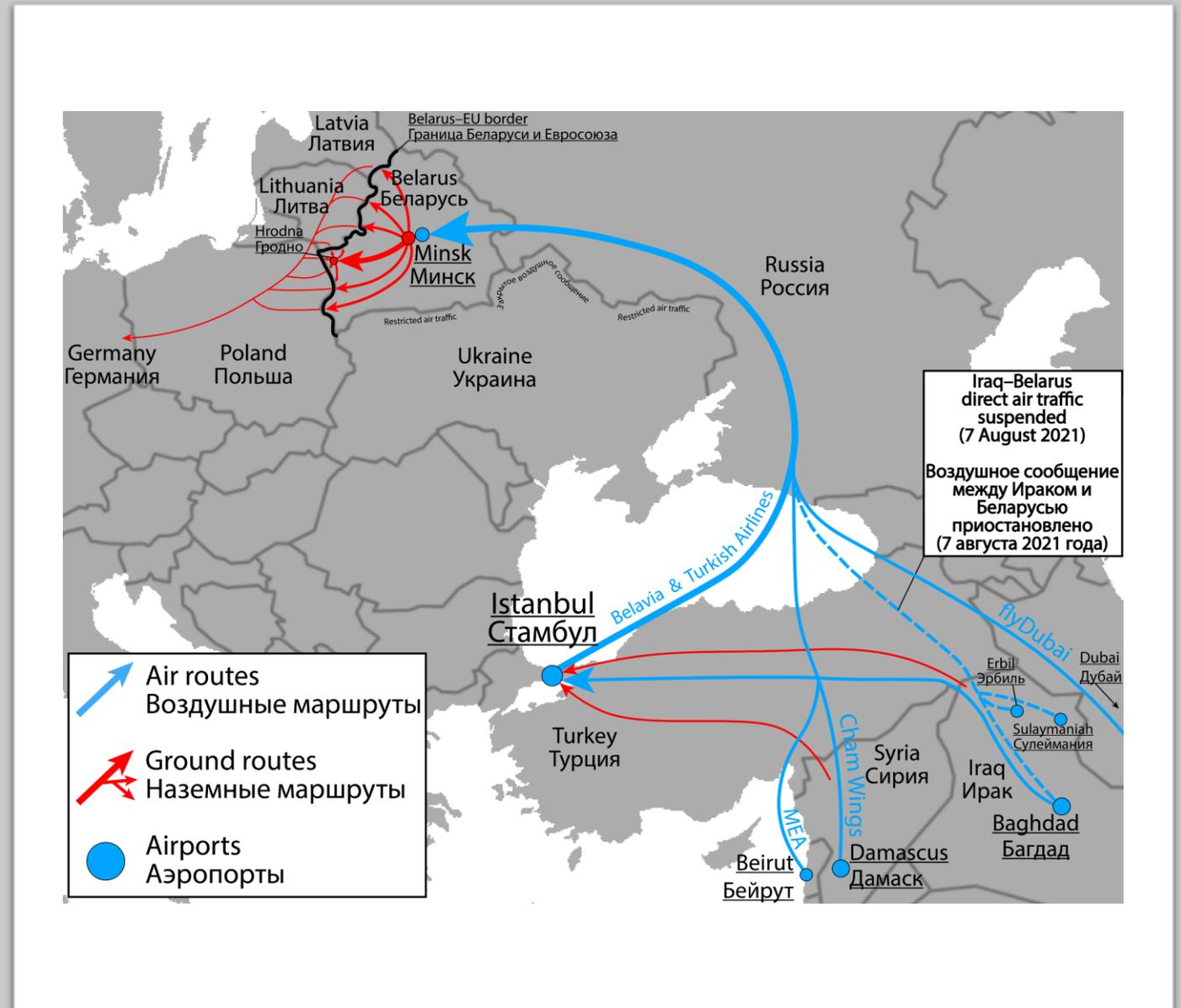


Border crossing in Kuźnica  
Białostocka/Bruski, 15.11.2021,  
source: Gazeta Wyborcza

## Border crisis – Autumn 2021

Plan orchestrated by Putin&Lukashenko:

- Sanctions on Lukashenko's regime after the „lost elections” in 2020
- Banning Belavia from flying to Europe after Ryanair flight incident 23th May – Belavia flights redirected to Middle East
- Distracting attention from the Belarussian-Russian „military exercises” in the area
- Destabilising situation in Poland, Lithuania and Latvia
- Kurdish-Iraqi-Belarusian smugglers were active from Winter 2020. Until Summer 2021 many migrants already managed to cross this border and reach Germany&other Western countries.
- Dehumanisation of migrants by Polish authorities: „tools of Lukashenko regime”
- Declaring emergency zone in the border areas: NGOs had no legal access.
- Promoting the idea that helping the migrants is illegal.



## Trip:

- Costs of the trip: 12-15 000 dollars/per person
- Iraqi Kurdistan with its economical&political crisis became a perfect target: disillusioned middle class able to pay such money to get to Europe.
- Lack of knowledge about this part of the world & different climate:

„You will walk trough a forest and then after one hour ride you will be in Germany”

## Numbers (Polish Immigrant Office):

Applications for international protections in 2021 (September):

Afghanistan: 1700

Belarus: 1400

Russia: 800

Iraq: 500

Migrants on the border& in Belaruss in November: 4000-10000

Refugees from Ukraine, Spring 2022: 2 000 000

## LARGE FOREST & FREEZING TEMPREATURES



Source: Compass

## Kurdish Women

Large families: women fleeing economical and political crisis along with their husbands&children, pregnant women, disabled children

Women travelling alone: fleeing domestic violence

The Yezidis: old ladies with or without children, wishing to join their relatives in Germany: escaping from the hopeless situation in the refugee camps in Iraqi Kurdistan.

### Situation in the refugee camps:

sometimes separated from their husbands

difficult conditions: locked with their children in a very small space

Pregnant women: the perspective of returning to the camp after giving birth



Family of Evin Irfan Zaher from Duhok, source Kurdistan24&Dialog Foundation



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