

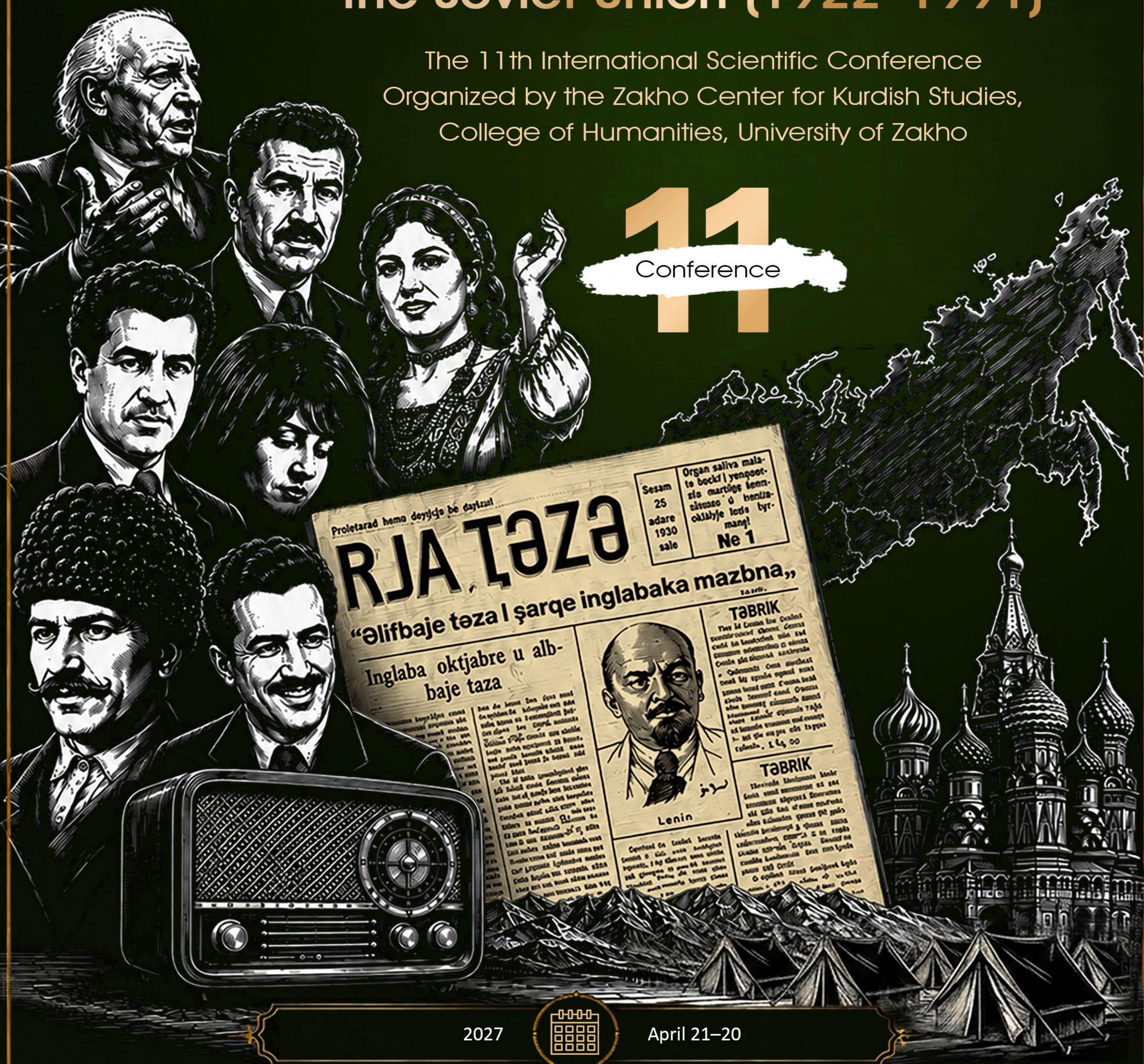


The Kurdish Cultural Movement in the Soviet Union (1922–1991)

The 11th International Scientific Conference
Organized by the Zakho Center for Kurdish Studies,
College of Humanities, University of Zakho

11

Conference



2027



April 21–20

Zakho Center for Kurdish Studies, College of Humanities, University of Zakho

Zakho – Kurdistan Region – Iraq



Literature



Language



Journalism & Radio



Culture



History & Sociology



1. Introduction

Geographically anchored at the intersection of the Middle East and the Caucasus, the historical domain of Kurdistan borders the traditional frontiers of Armenia, Georgia, and Russia. Over centuries, a complex interplay of political shifts, social upheavals, and economic migration displaced Kurdish communities across the expanse of the former Soviet Union—stretching from the South Caucasus to the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

The roots of Kurdish-Soviet relations extend deep into the medieval era, though they gained significant momentum with the rise of the Russian Empire. As Tsarist expansion pushed south into Karabakh and the wider Caucasus, the Kurdish population transitioned from distant neighbors to vital actors on the Empire's geopolitical periphery. Consequently, Kurdistan came to occupy a prominent position in Russian strategic considerations.

Following the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922, Moscow's approach to minority populations underwent a profound shift. While early Soviet ideology formally subordinated national identity to class consciousness, the state nevertheless recognized the strategic power of cultural diplomacy. Under the umbrella of Soviet nationality policies, the regime invested in the intellectual life and heritage of its diverse peoples. For the Kurdish diaspora, this Paradoxical environment provided both a venue for cultural preservation and a structured platform to cultivate their literary, linguistic, and historical traditions.

2. General Overview

Following the devastation of the First World War, the first major Kurdish intellectual movement began to take shape—not in the Middle Eastern heartland, but within the Kurdish diaspora of the Soviet Union. By the time the USSR was formally established in 1922, well-established Kurdish communities were already rooted across the South Caucasus, particularly in Armenia and Georgia. It was within these borderland enclaves that a resilient cultural and political awakening took root, enduring through the late 1980s. This intellectual renaissance was anchored by three pivotal pillars. First was the publication of *Riya Teze* ("The New Path"), which would become the longest-running Kurdish-language newspaper in modern history. Second was the pioneering broadcast of Yerevan Radio, which beamed Kurdish music, news, and oral traditions across international frontiers to an audience long deprived of native-language media. Third was a flourishing of literary, linguistic, and historical scholarship; Soviet Kurdish writers produced some of the earliest modern Kurdish novels, generating a body of work that profoundly shaped cultural consciousness across the wider Middle East.

Ultimately, tracing the trajectory of the Soviet Kurdish intellectual movement—which blossomed under remarkably complex, often precarious socio-political conditions—is more than an academic exercise. It offers a vital window into how a displaced community preserved its voice, fulfilling a deeply felt cultural imperative for Kurds both within the post-Soviet space and across the global diaspora.

3. Conference Objectives

The conference aims to explore the key developmental stages of the Kurdish intellectual movement in the Soviet Union through a multidisciplinary lens. To achieve this, the program is structured around six core thematic areas:

1. Linguistic Heritage and Philology

- **Grammar & Lexicography:** Evaluate the impact of foundational Kurdish grammars, dictionaries, and linguistic studies produced during the Soviet era in preserving and standardizing the language.
- **Patterns of Language Evolution:** Trace the linguistic development and structural shifts within Kurdish dialects under Soviet academic scholarship.
- **Translational Dynamics:** Analyze the role of translation as a tool for cross-cultural exchange and the preservation of Kurdish literary and historical texts.

2. Literary Production and Historiography

- **Literary Analysis:** Conduct rigorous scholarly examinations of Soviet Kurdish literature across its historical stages, encompassing novels, poetic collections (diwans), biographies, and archival publications.
- **Sociopolitical Insights:** Utilize literary and historical works as primary sources to unpack the social, political, and intellectual realities of Kurdish life in the USSR.
- **Academic Publishing:** Encourage the research, compilation, and publication of specialized volumes dedicated to Soviet Kurdish history and letters.

3. Folklore, Culture, and Identity

- **Folklore Preservation:** Document and analyze all branches of Kurdish folklore, highlighting its function in retaining national values, customs, and spiritual traditions.
- **Cultural Interculturality:** Examine how Kurdish cultural heritage interacted with and was supported by the broader tapestry of nations within the Soviet Union.
- **Local Distinctiveness:** Identify the unique cultural traits that emerged within the Soviet Kurdish diaspora across different Soviet republics.

4. Media and Public Discourse

- **Mass Media Dynamics:** Investigate the historical impact of Soviet Kurdish media institutions-most notably newspaper publishing (such as Riya Teze) and radio broadcasts (such as Yerevani Radiyo)-in fostering cultural and national consciousness.
- **Knowledge Dissemination:** Assess the reach of these media channels in broadcasting Kurdish intellectual thought both locally and across international borders.

5. Historical & Geographical Mapping

- **Demographic Footprint:** Map the geographical distribution and settlement histories of Kurdish communities across the former Soviet republics.
- **Illuminated History:** Bring scholarly focus to the history of Soviet Kurdistan, addressing a region that has historically remained on the margins of broader Kurdish studies.

6. Transnational Connections and Institutional Collaboration

- **Bridging Geographical Divides:** Identify the historical and political obstacles that restricted communication between Soviet Kurds and the four primary parts of Greater Kurdistan, while formulating strategies to bridge these divides today.
- **Academic Partnerships:** Foster long-term academic cooperation between universities across Kurdistan and researchers of the former Soviet Union in fields such as sociology, linguistics, history, media, and literature.



4. Vision

Exploring the phenomenon of Kurdish intellectual life in the Soviet Union (1922–1991) across literary, historical, linguistic, and media dimensions offers a vital reinterpretation of the era's cultural landscape. Central to this inquiry is an analysis of how Marxist–Leninist ideology informed and shaped regional intellectual production. Yet, despite the rigorous oversight and ideological surveillance exercised by the Soviet state, Kurdish scholars, writers, and artists carved out a vibrant space for creative expression, yielding remarkable literary and scholarly achievements that resonated far beyond Soviet borders. To honor and interrogate this legacy, the conference aims to establish a dynamic, multidisciplinary platform for scholarly dialogue. By bringing together diverse perspectives, the event seeks to foster a rigorous exchange of knowledge on the evolution, challenges, and enduring impacts of the Soviet Kurdish intellectual movement throughout its distinct historical phases.

5. Conference Themes

The conference will address the following thematic areas:

5.1. Intellectual and Cultural Studies

- Kurdish language and literature in the Soviet Union
- Kurdish journalism in the Soviet Union
- Kurdish radio broadcasting in the Soviet Union
- Kurdish literary and social associations and organizations in the Soviet Union
- The role of Kurdish scholars in the humanities and natural sciences
- The Kurds in the intellectual and publishing life of the Soviet Union

5.2. Social Studies

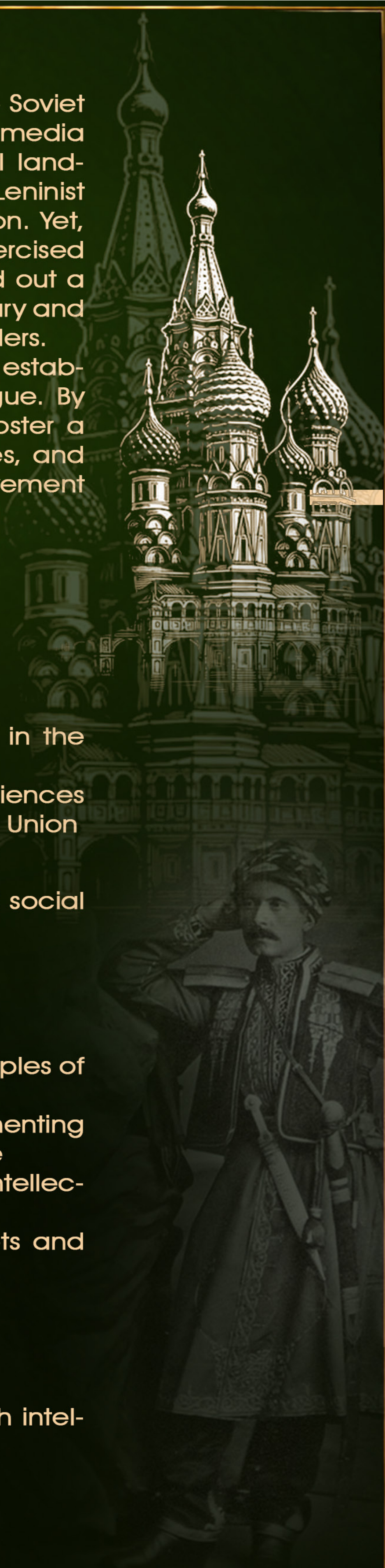
- The Kurds in the Soviet Union: geographical distribution and social structure
- Social traditions, customs, and cultural practices
- Kurdish folklore and oral literature

5.3. Historical Studies

- The image of the Kurds in the collective memory of the peoples of the Soviet Union
- The role of state institutions and official bodies in documenting and disseminating Kurdish intellectual and cultural heritage
- The importance of Soviet archives in advancing Kurdish intellectual and cultural studies
- Preservation and restoration of ancient Kurdish manuscripts and historical writings

5.4. The Kurds of Greater Kurdistan and the Soviet Union

- Kurdish migration to the Soviet Union
- The role of Kurdish refugees in the Soviet Union
- The contribution of the Kurds to the development of Kurdish intellectual life in the Soviet Union
- Kurdish academic delegations to the Soviet Union



6. Submission Guidelines

- The Scientific Committee of the conference welcomes research papers in Kurdish, English, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish.
- The abstract must not exceed 500 words and should include at least five (5) keywords.
- The abstract must be written in the same language as the paper, prepared in Microsoft Word, and formatted in accordance with the conference guidelines.
- The full paper must not exceed 10,000 words.
- Times New Roman shall be used as the font for papers written in Kurdish, Persian, Arabic, English, and Turkish.
- All submissions must be prepared in accordance with the APA (American Psychological Association) referencing and citation style.

7. Important Dates

- Conference Announcement: 1 August 2026
- Deadline for Abstract Submission: 10 September 2026
- Notification of Abstract Acceptance/Rejection: 20 September 2026
- Deadline for Full Paper Submission: 20 December 2026
- Notification of Full Paper Acceptance/Rejection: 10 January 2027
- Conference Dates: 20–21 April 2027

8. Submission of Papers

An online submission portal will be made available on the website of the Zakho Center for Kurdish Studies, where all relevant submission information and instructions will be published.

12. Contact Information

- E-mail: hum.isc2027@uoz.edu.krd
- Mobile: +964 (0) 751 536 1550

Note: All conference-related expenses will be covered by the conference organizers, except participants' travel expenses.





Zakho Centre
for Kurdish Studies

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