



# World Directory of Minorities

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## (Y)Ezidies

Ezidis (also called Yezidis) adhere to a non-monotheist religion of ancient origin in the Middle East. While they are ethnic Kurds, Ezidis emphasize their distinct religious identity. They speak Ezidi, a dialect of Kurdish. Historically concentrated in eastern, southern and south-eastern Turkey, their number was around 60,000 in early 1980s. From the mid-1980s, nearly all of them emigrated to Europe to escape persecution and armed conflict. The number of Ezidis remaining in Turkey is unknown. Research in Diyarbakır, Mardin, Urfa, Batman and Şırnak in July 2006 identified 410 Ezidis living in these provinces.

Ezidis were affected in the armed conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK during 1984–99, when masses of civilians were displaced from their homes in eastern and south-eastern Turkey. Consensus between NGOs, a parliamentary commission and the Hacettepe survey (commissioned by the government) is that the security forces were responsible for many of the evictions. Alongside Assyrians, Arabs and Kurds, Ezidi IDPs have suffered lack of just compensation, not granted the right to return until 1999, limited aid for reconstruction of homes, and lack of adequate education on what restitution is available to them.

The number of Ezidis who have emigrated from Kars and Ağrı in eastern Turkey to large cities in the west, as well as the remaining Ezidis in central Turkey and southern provinces of Maras and Antep, is unknown. In recent years, Ezidis have been returning to their historical homelands in small numbers.

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