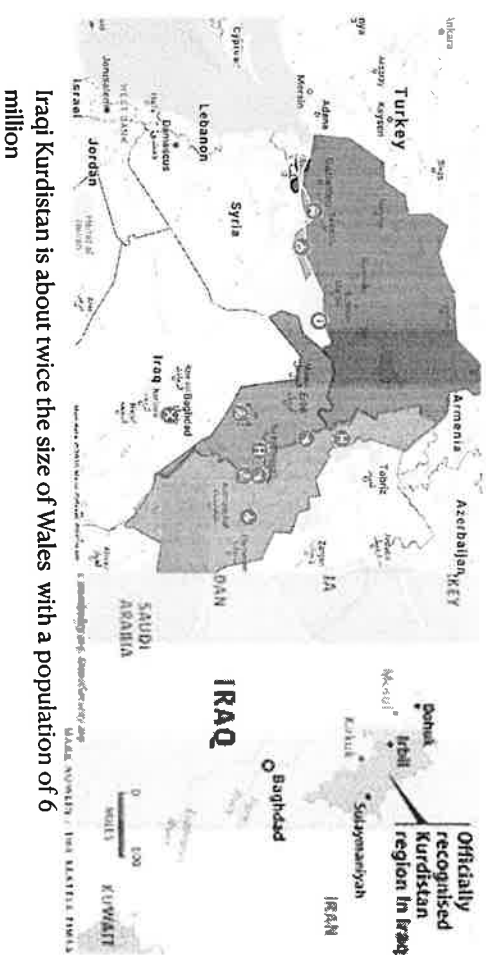


Hawkar Salih also known as Hisham Saeed

Iraqi Kurd

My story December 2023



Iraqi Kurdistan is about twice the size of Wales with a population of 6 million

Iraqi Kurdistan

- Kurds come from an area that is now part of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Armenia and Syria.
- A Kurd speaks Kurdish BUT there are several versions AND most also speak the local language as speaking Kurdish was banned for many years.
- Most Kurds are Muslim
- About 40 million Kurds in world
- The word Kurd may mean Tent Dweller or Wanderer

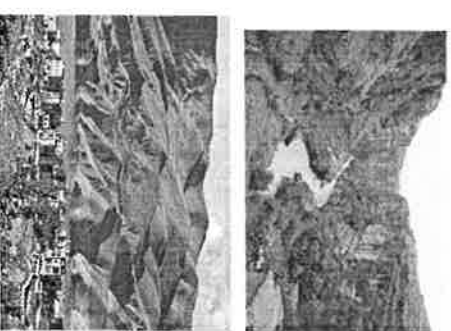
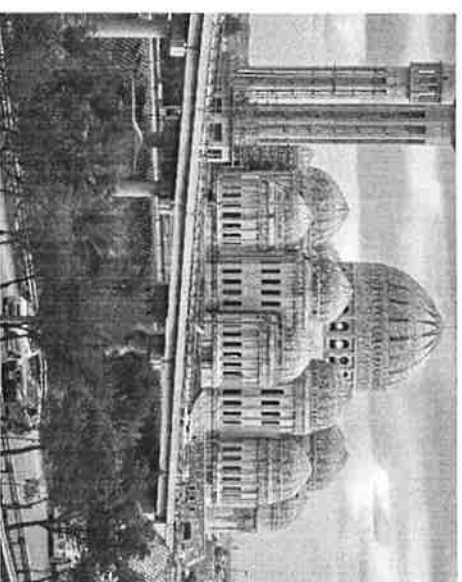


History

- Kurdish people always wanted their own land and to be free from the Ottoman Empire
- 1916 Britain and France divided up the Middle East into states
- France controlled Lebanon and Syria
- Britain controlled Palestine, Jordan and Iraq
- A referendum was planned about a Kurdish Homeland but in 1923 Turkey refused this.
- 1918-1991 Kurdish Guerrilla wars in various countries to try to achieve a homeland



'No Friends but the Mountains.' A Kurdish saying.



Wars since 1991 Gulf War

Iraqi Kurdistan established

- 1992 Parliamentary elections for a Kurdistan regional government [Bit like Wales?]
- 1994-1998 civil war between political groups in Kurdistan.
- 2003 America and UK invaded Iraq and Iraqi Kurdish Army [Peshmerga] fought with them against Iraq.
- A new Regional Kurdistan Government was formed
- 2014 ISIS Islamic State of Iraq and Syria attacked Kurdish cities and Peshmerga fought them.
- America supported the Peshmerga
- 2017-2019 renegotiated Independence
- But Iraqi Kurdistan is still unstable as it is landlocked and has to depend upon neighbours for supply routes and to be able to export Oil



Kurdistan Culture

- Story telling, music and dance
- Weaving of carpets, rugs and cloth
- Handicrafts such as chess, jewellery, embroidery, leathework
- Sports- Football.
- Food-Common foods include dolma (vegetables stuffed in grape leaves), kofta (spiced meatballs or meatloaf), flatbreads, honey and black tea. lamb and chicken. Frequently, lamb or chicken are simmered in a tomato and yogurt-based sauce and served over rice- or bulgur-pilaf.



Hawkar's Story

- Born in Mosul -2nd biggest city in Iraq
- Parents split up when 3
- Unable to go to school due to family and political problems
- Worked on small farm with Mother and Grandparents
- best friend was a little dog



Swansea

My new home

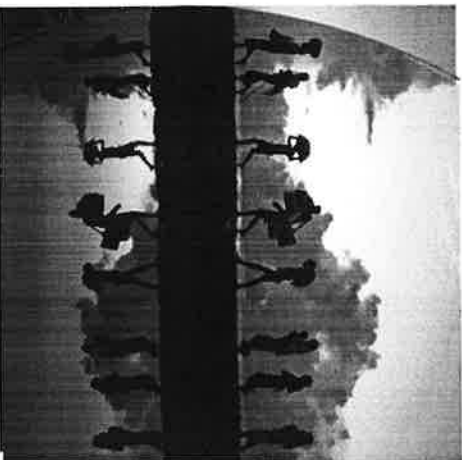
- 'Like being deaf and blind' as I didn't speak or read English and found few other people who spoke my language,
- English language classes online, at drop in centres and in the summer Swansea University quickly improved my English..
- Home Office refused my asylum application and took away support but gave me leave to appeal.
- I was homeless for a while until a host home was found for me by Sharetaawe.



My journey to the UK

War

- Had to leave home due to war in 2016
- As the war spread, Grandfather sent me away to be safe
- Sent with people smugglers
- Many days outside in cold and without food.
- Journey by car, lorry, boat and ferry





Children's Commissioner for Wales Rocio Cluente, Inspirational Student of the Year Hisham Saeed and Gower College principal Mark Jones.





**From Shepherd boy to Pharmacy
student in 6 years**

- Be strong, because things will get better. It may be stormy now but it never rains forever
- You've been through the best and the worst . You've taken some rough roads and that helped you become stronger and wiser. You are now equipped to conquer the twists and turns of life
- Any questions welcomed

