دووەمین دیداری کوردناسی



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کوردستانی
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Second Annual
Kurdish Studies Forum
2026 Schedule
November 11 and 12
American University of Iraq, Sulaimani Campus | RSVP

Refer to full biographies for each Forum participant at the end of this program.

Wednesday, November 11 2026
Day One

10 am | Conference Hall
Welcome Addresses
Bilal Wahab and Shene Mohammed

10:30 am | Conference Hall
Keynote - The Historical, Political, and Theoretical Dimensions of *Kurdnasî*
Arianne Shahvisi in conversation with Fazil Moradi

11:30 am | Conference Hall
Panel - Activating Photographic Archives After Armed Conflict
William Gallois in conversation with Marc Marin Webb and Nathaniel Brunt

12:45 pm | Cafeteria
Lunch

2:00 pm | Conference Hall
Panel - The Force of Minor Cinema
Özgür Çiçek in conversation with Zara Masrour and Beri Shalmashi

3:15 pm | Outside the Conference Hall
Tea, Coffee & Sweets

4:15 pm | Conference Hall
Film Screening
Maryam Ebrahimi's *The Phantom Pain of Rojava*
Introductory Remarks by Pshtiwan Babakr



By Maryam Ebrahimi
Film Screening | 81 min
Sweden, Norway | 2026

Thursday, November 12 ,2026
Day Two

10 am | Conference Hall
Panel - The Character of Kurdish Poetry
Bryar M. Tahir in conversation with
Ahmedi Mela and Ramyar Mahmood

11:15 am | Conference Hall
Poetry Reading
With Berken Bereh and Rêbîn Mihemed

12:45 pm | Cafeteria
Lunch

2:00 pm | Conference Hall
Panel - Contemporary Hawrami Poetry and Short Stories
Farshid Rostami in conversation with Korsh Amini

3:15 pm | Conference Hall
Closing Remarks
Yad Abdulqader and Marie LaBrosse

3:30 pm | Outside the Conference Hall
Tea, Coffee & Sweets

4:00 pm | AUIS Lecture Hall (B-B11-1)
Working Group Session - Regional and International Futures in AI
Goran Jawdat and Alex Levinson

5:30 pm | Conference Hall
Musical Performance - Kurdistan String Quintet

Ako Aziz	Composer,Arranger, Violin
Zana Jalal	Violin
Sherko M. Salih	Violin
Rezhwan Ahmed	Viola
Shilan Omar	Cello

پێنجینەی ژێداری کوردستان



Nov 12, 2026
5:00 P.M

AUIS . Conference Hall

Ako Aziz [Composer, Arranger, Violin]
Rezhwan Ahmed [Viola]
Shilan Omar [Cello]
Zana Jalal [Violin]
Sherko M.Salih [Violin]

ئاکۆ عەزیز [دانەر و ڤایۆلین]؛
ڕێژوان ئەحمەد [ڤیۆلا]؛
شیلان عومەر [چەلۆ]؛
زانا جەلال [ڤایۆلین]؛
شێرکۆ محەمەد سالح [ڤایۆلین]؛

AUIS

Kurdistan String Quintet

Throughout the Kurdish Studies Forum, publications from Kashkul Books will be available for perusal and purchase in the lobby of the Conference Hall. For a full catalog, please see Kashkul's website: kashkul.auis.edu.krd.

Throughout the year, Kashkul maintains a chartered **Little Free Library** program. Please feel free to stop by, donate a book, and take one home!

Kashkul Little Free Library, Culture Factory
The Khayat Memorial Library, AUIS Stone Garden (coming soon)
Public Park Library, Slemani Public Park (coming soon)
coordinator: Pshtiwan Babakr, co-designer: Ali Mohammed, craftsman and co-designer: Sabah Baram

Each year, in preparation for the Kurdish Studies Forum, Kashkul hosts guest lectures and workshops by hosting longer term residencies for artists and scholars. This year, that included:

- **Reza Alipour**

"Seeing, Writing, Rewriting," a workshop.
"The Poetic Language and the Language of Poetry," an open conversation session.
Kashkul & Balinde Space, Slemani Culture Factory, October 1-16.

- **Holly Mason Badra**

"Expanding the Self Through Art," a workshop.
"Choman Hardi in conversation with Holly Mason Badra."
AUIS Lecture Hall (B-B11-1) and Hardi Cultural Center, October 9-16.

- **William Gallois**

"The Art of Concentration in Modern Islamic Visual Culture"
A workshop and in-conversation session.
Zheen Archive, November 9-13.

- **Marc Marin Webb**

"Activating Photographic Archives After Armed Conflict"
A workshop and in-conversation session.
AUIS Lecture Hall (B-G09- and A-G05-), November 9-13.

- **Nathaniel Brunt**

"Activating Photographic Archives After Armed Conflict"
A workshop and in-conversation session.
AUIS Lecture Hall (B-G09- and A-G05-),
November 13-9.

- **Bryar Bajalan**

"Translating Orality: Carrying Voices in Times of Disruption and Violence"
Guest Lecture
AUIS Lecture Hall (B-F41-2), November ,16 2026.

If you are interested in joining Kashkul as an artist or scholar in residence ahead of the next Kurdish Studies Forum in November 2027, please email kashkul@auis.edu.krd with your full legal name, area of interest, three most recent publications, and a few proposed topics for lectures or workshops.

Biographies

Ahmedi Mela completed his primary and secondary education in Kirkuk and his high school education in Baghdad. He earned his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from the University of Franche-Comté in France. He is currently a lecturer in the Department of French Language at the Faculty of Arts, University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain. He has published books, research studies, and other written works in Kurdish and French, and has translated works between the two languages.

Ako Aziz is a musician, composer, educator, and orchestra leader. He has been an active member of the Sulaimani Symphony Orchestra and the leader of the Kurdistan String Quartet since 2010. He is the founder of the Sulaimani Youth Orchestra and its Music School, dedicated to young musical talent and music education in Kurdistan.

Alex Levinson is a leading expert in AI and cybersecurity who advises public and private sector organizations as they navigate an increasingly complex technology and security landscape. He is co-founder of an AI research lab focused on cybersecurity and previously led security programs at some of the world's largest AI and technology companies. He has over fifteen years competing, organizing, and designing cybersecurity competitions, and regularly speaks at industry leading conferences and events.

Arianne Shahvisi is a philosopher with research interests in ethics, feminist philosophy, the philosophy of science, and social epistemology. Her current projects focus on reproductive justice, migration and borders, and global health. She teaches courses in moral philosophy, feminist bioethics, and global health ethics, and supervises graduate research projects. Arianne writes essays for the London Review of Books, and has also written for the Guardian, the Economist, and the Independent, among others. Her first book Arguing for a Better World: How Philosophy Can Help Us Fight for Social Justice(Penguin, John Murray) was published in 2023, and has been translated into Spanish, Korean, and Japanese. Arianne is joint editor-in-chief of the Journal of Medical Ethics, a committee member for the Wellcome Trust, and a member of the Lancet Commission on Racism and Child Health.

Beri Shalmashi is a Dutch Kurdish filmmaker, writer and cultural director. Her work often explores questions of identity, displacement, memory and political history, and the ways personal stories intersect with larger historical narratives.

She is the creator of "Big Village", an award-winning interactive documentary that uses personal testimony, archival material and digital storytelling to reconstruct the history and memory of the headquarters of the KDPI, an Iranian Kurdish political movement, located across the border in Iraqi Kurdistan. The project reflects on a time she witnessed as a newborn and on her wider interest in what happens when histories are fragmented, inaccessible or absent from official archives. She explores how new forms of storytelling can create alternative spaces for memory and knowledge.

Shalmashi works across fiction, documentary and interactive media and is a prominent public voice on Kurdish rights, representation and political history. Her films and projects include “Mama”, “Shouted from the Rooftops”, “Casting Call” and the documentary “At the Edge of the Revolution”. Alongside her filmmaking practice, she mentors, writes and is director of Avanti, a platform for culture, dialogue and social change in the Netherlands.

Berken Bereh is a poet, translator, writer, and editor of the poetry section of Nûbihar magazine. His work first appeared in Tîroj and later in many other Kurdish magazines and newspapers. In 1999, he established an online magazine called “Kulîna Kulîlkan.” His poems have been translated into Turkish, Arabic, Spanish, English, German, French, and Japanese. A selection of his poems, Min Dîrokî Xomm Dewêt, was published by Balinde in Slemani and by Spîrêz in Duhok. In 2025, he received the Hejar Golden Pen Award at Sanandaj University.

Bilal Wahab is President of the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS), and a scholar and policy strategist with extensive experience in academia, public policy, and international affairs.

As President, he leads efforts to strengthen AUIS's academic excellence, institutional independence, and international standing.

Previously, Dr. Wahab was a Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, specializing in Kurdish and Iraqi politics, governance, energy, and regional affairs. A Fulbright Scholar, he holds a Ph.D. from George Mason University, an M.A. from American University, and a B.A. from Salahaddin University.

He is committed to advancing scholarship, informed public dialogue, and Kurdistan's engagement with the wider world.

Bryar M. Tahir was born in Sulaimani in 1986. He holds a BA in Kurdish Language and Literature. He co-founded Balinde Poetry, where he currently serves as the director.

Bryar Bajalan is a writer, translator, and filmmaker currently pursuing a doctorate in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter. His work has appeared in Ambit, Hyperallergic, and Modern Poetry in Translation, among others. His short documentary about early twentieth-century Baghdadi poet Al-Zahawi won an award for outstanding achievement at the Tagore International Film Festival. With Shook, he has co-translated Al-Saddiq Al-Raddi's A Friends Kitchen (Poetry Translation Centre, 2023) and Zêdan Xelef's A Barcode Scanner (Kashkul Books, 2021/ Gato Negro Ediciones, 2022).

Farshid Rostami is a poet, writer, and translator. In 2021, he graduated from the Department of Persian Language and Literature at the University of Kurdistan in Sanandaj, and in 2024, he received a master's degree in Comparative Literature at Razi University in Kirmashan. He has published three collections of poems in Hawrami, and one collection of poems in Sorani. He is a recipient of the Gelawêj and Pirjê poetry awards. He edited and translated an anthology of contemporary Hawrami poetry and an anthology of Hawrami short stories into Persian, and has also translated plays into Hawrami along with academic papers and research articles in scholarly journals.

Fazil Moradi, PhD, is Senior Research Associate at the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre, University of Johannesburg; Associate Researcher at the Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences; and Affiliated Scholar at the Centre for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Crimes against Humanity, CUNY, New York. Dr Moradi was a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Fellow and Visiting Researcher at Hiroshima University; and has served as Writing Fellow and Visiting Associate Professor at the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study; Researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and the University of Halle; and collaborator with medical scientists at Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg. His recent publications include, Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation, co-edited by M. Six-Hohenbalken and R. Buchenhorst (Routledge, 2017); 'In Search of Decolonized Political Futures'. Ed. Special Issue, Anthropological Theory (2023); Being Human: Political Modernity and Hospitality in Kurdistan-Iraq (Rutgers UP, 2024); 'Worldwide-ization of Epistemicide'. Journal of Genocide Research (2025); 'Beyond Repair: Modernity's Toxic Afterlives from Minamata to Fukushima'. Ed. Special Issue, Janus Unbound (forthcoming, 2026).

Goran Jawdat is the Director of the AI Lab at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS). Before joining AUIS, he was a Senior Software Engineer at Microsoft in Dublin, Ireland, where he worked on Microsoft Word and was part of the team that first brought AI into Word with Copilot. Born and raised in Kurdistan, he earned his master›s degree in Istanbul and spent about nine years in Ireland before returning home. At AUIS, he leads the lab›s work on AI infrastructure for the Kurdish language, developing local AI talent, and applied AI projects with real-world impact.

Holly Mason Badra is a Kurdish American writer living in Northern Virginia. She is the curatorial editor of Sleeping in the Courtyard: Contemporary Kurdish Writers in Diaspora (The University of Arkansas Press). Her work has been published or is forthcoming in Mizna, The Markaz Review, Poet Lore, Everything is Political, MĀNOA: A Pacific Journal of International Writing, Meridian, The Arkansas International, The Rumpus, CALYX, Asymptote, Koukash Review, Rowayat, The Adroit Journal, and elsewhere. She is the associate director of Women and Gender Studies at George Mason University. She reads for Poetry Daily and serves as the board vice president of Henar Press.

Korsh Amini is a writer, translator, and scholar of the Hawrami language, culture, and literature. He has published a short-story collection titled *The Last Bullet*. His most recent work is the four-volume *Myths of Our Land*, an academic study of Hawrami myths and legends, which received the first Hajar Literary Award, presented by the University of Kurdistan in Sanandaj. He has delivered keynote speeches at university conferences, edited books, and published scholarly articles. He is currently working on a nine-volume book on Hawrami language, culture, and literature.

Marc Marin Webb is an architect and holds a PhD in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures from the University of Pennsylvania (2026, Roger Allen Dissertation Award), where his dissertation examined the preservation of Yezidi sacred landscapes after the 2014 genocide. Trained as an architect in Barcelona and Berlin, he has worked on archaeological and heritage-preservation projects across Syria, Iraqi Kurdistan, and southern Iraq, including the conservation of the Yezidi Sanctuary of Sheikh Adi in Lalish since 2019. He is co-founder of the Sersal Project, an initiative dedicated to preserving, digitizing, and returning Yezidi photographic heritage to the communities it depicts, launched after he rediscovered a forgotten archive of 1930s Yezidi photographs at the Penn Museum.

Marie LaBrosse is a poet, translator, professor, and Founding Director of Kashkul at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS). She holds a PhD in Kurdish Studies from the University of Exeter.

Book-length works include Kajal Ahmad's *Handful of Salt* (2016), Abdulla Pashew's *Dictionary of Midnight* (2019), Farhad Pirbal's *Potato Eaters* (2023, co-trans. Jiyar Homer), Temo's *Nightlands* (2024, co-trans. Zêdan Xelef), *Something Missing From This World*, a multilingual anthology of Yazidi voices (2024, contributor), Hero Kurda's *I Write Yousif* (2027), and *Exile is Arrival*, an anthology of twelve nineteenth-century Sorani Kurdish poets co-translated and co-edited with Shene Mohammed.

Her own collection of poems, *Dream State*, came out with Unnamed Press in 2026. Other original poems and essays have appeared in *Poetry*, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *World Literature Today*, *Plume*, *Epiphany*, *The Iowa Review*, and *Words Without Borders*. She served as the Founding Director of Slemani's UNESCO City of Literature. She was a 2022 NEA Fellow, the first ever working from the Kurdish.

Maryam Ebrahimi is an Emmy Award-winning Swedish-Iranian documentary filmmaker, producer, and director. Born in Tehran in 1976, she studied Art and Art Theory at the Art Faculty in Tehran before continuing her education at Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design in Sweden, where she earned an MA in Art in the Public Realm. She co-directed the documentary *No Burqas Behind Bars* (2012), set in an Afghan women's prison, and produced *I Was Worth 50 Sheep* (2010), and *Prison Sisters* (2016). Her latest features are *Stronger Than A Bullet* (IDFA 2017) and *The Phantom Pain of Rojava* (CPH:DOX 2026). Maryam is a 2021 Chicken & Egg Award recipient.

Nathaniel Brunt is an interdisciplinary scholar, documentary photographer, and educator. His documentary and academic work critically examines modern armed conflict and the ways it is, and has been, represented photographically. Brunt completed his PhD in the joint Communication and Culture program at Toronto Metropolitan University and York University, with research supported by SSHRC and the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation.

Brunt's photographic work has been widely published and exhibited internationally. He is currently working on long-term projects in Northern Iraq and the Kashmir Valley and holds appointments as a KULA Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Victoria Libraries and a Hannah Arendt Fellow at TIB (Technische Informationsbibliothek – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Technik und Naturwissenschaften und Universitätsbibliothek) in Hannover, Germany. While diverse in format, his work is united by a commitment to producing projects that personalize the often-abstract nature of modern war.

Özgür Çiçek is a film scholar, researcher, and lecturer in the Department of Media and Culture at the University of Amsterdam. Her research interests include national and transnational cinemas, minor cinemas with a particular emphasis on Kurdish cinema, documentary film studies, memory and archive studies, and film aesthetics. Last year, she co-edited Audiovisual Healing and Reparation: Recuperative Affect of Mediation. Her forthcoming monograph, contracted with Edinburgh University Press, is titled Kurdish Cinema in Turkey: Indigeneity, Imprisonment, and the Archive.

Pshtiwan Babakr is a documentarian, graphic designer and curator. He serves as Art Director at Kashkul, the center for arts and culture at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani, overseeing exhibitions, and video productions, and writes on Kurdish art and cinema.

Ramyar Mahmood is a Kurdish poet and writer. He studied Kurdish Language and Literature at the University of Sulaimani, graduating in 1996. Between 1997 and 1999, he founded and edited Gotar, a journal dedicated to research. He has published four poetry collections and four research books. His collected poems were published by Sardam Publishing House in 2021, and his novella appeared in 2026. His poetry has been translated into English, Spanish, Persian, and Danish. Since 2019, he has founded and led KurdRawm Media.

Rêbîn Mihemed teaches Kurdish Studies at Soran Technical College, Erbil Polytechnic University. He holds a master's degree in Kurdish literature, and his research focuses on literary criticism, textual analysis, and translation. He has published two books, *The Structure of Narrative in Halim Yousif's Novel Sobarto*, and a translated collection by Berken Bereh *Min Dîrokî Xomm Dewêt*.

Reza Alipour is a Kurdish poet and writer from Saqqez in Rojhelat, Kurdistan. His collected poems were published by Balinde in 2026. He is the author of two novels, *Lewê Memre* (Don't Die There) (2025) and *Alif/Ya* (2019). In 2023, he was selected as the author of Balinde's annual statement on poetry.

Rezhwan Ahmed is a violist, pianist, and music educator. She graduated from the University of Sulaimani's Fine Arts Music Department, she has served as viola section leader for both the Sulaimani Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra of Iraq. Her performances in international concerts and festivals across Austria, Germany, France, the UK, and Bulgaria, has led to ensembles like the Kizhan Group and the Kurdistan String Quintet.

Shene Mohammed is a translator, writer, and teaches translation. She holds an MFA in Literary Translation from the University of Iowa. Her book-length works include *Exile is Arrival* (Deep Vellum, 2027), an anthology of twelve nineteenth-century Sorani Kurdish poets co-translated and co-edited with Dr. Alana Marie Levinson-LaBrosse, and *Occupying Darkness* (Archipelago). She has served as Managing Editor for Exchanges Journal of Literary Translation, and her writing has appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review, Poetry, World Literature Today, Modern Poetry in Translation*, and *The Offing*. She sits on the Board of Outreach at Henar Press, and currently serves as Kashkul's Forum Director of the Kurdish Studies Forum at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani.

Sherko M.Salih is a violinist, music educator, university lecturer, conductor, and ensemble musician. Since 2013, he has been a lecturer in the Music Department at the College of Fine Arts, University of Sulaimani, and previously served as Head of the Music Department and lecturer at the Institute of Fine Arts. He studied at Dr. Hoch's Konservatorium in Frankfurt and the Peter Cornelius Konservatorium in Mainz, Germany.

Shilan Omar is a cellist, music educator, and performing artist. She studied music at the Institute of Fine Arts in Sulaimani and has been active in orchestral performance and music education. She has performed with orchestras, including the Sulaimani University Orchestra, National String Orchestra, Sulaimani String Orchestra, and Kurdish String Orchestra. Her artistic practice also includes collaborations with musicians and participation in concerts, festivals, and interdisciplinary performances in Kurdistan and abroad.

William Gallois is a Professor of the Islamic Mediterranean and Director of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter. He has formerly worked at a variety of universities in London and the Gulf.

Yad Abdulqader combines research and storytelling to explore the evolving narratives and challenges of Kurdish society. They write on questions of politics, gender, and social change, while also producing documentaries, short films, and stories that capture the everyday lives of people across the region. With more than six years of experience working with international organizations in Iraq and a Master's in Middle Eastern Studies, Yad brings a multidisciplinary perspective to discussions on Kurdish society, politics, and culture.

Zana Jalal is a music educator and a violinist in orchestral and ensemble performance. He joined the Sulaymaniyah Orchestra in 2003 and has since performed in concerts, workshops, recordings, and cultural programs in Kurdistan, Iraq and internationally, including in Austria, Germany, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, and France. He has studied Music in Saint Louis University, Missouri, and has served as a concertmaster and has performed as a violin soloist, as well as a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Iraq and the Kurdistan String Quintet. He teaches music at the Institute of Fine Arts in Sulaimani.

Zara Masrour was born and raised in Rojhilat (Eastern Kurdistan) and later moved to the Netherlands, where she began a new path in film studies. She holds an MA in Film and Contemporary Audiovisual Media from the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, and currently works as a programmer for the London Kurdish Film Festival. As a film researcher and cultural programmer, her work and writing explore stateless cinema, migration, identity, belonging, and Kurdish culture.



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