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DARK TIMES: REVISITING KURDISTAN OF THE 1980s

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EHESS IN PARIS

The 1980s seemed like the “darkest period” in Kurdish history: while the entirety of Kurdistan was affected by one form or another of war and violence, two structural dynamics of the Kurdish conflict, which had determined Kurdish history, have also been radicalized and militarized: the centrifugal one tearing apart the Kurdish space along the line of the state borders, linguistic and sectarian zones, partisan traditions and political cultures, and the centripetal one unifying it across these many borders under the idea and ideal of “Kurdishness” and by many forms of pacific or armed mobility. This tension was not an easy one to bear, but it has been managed, although at a high cost. The 1980s (and as far as Turkey concerned 1990s) have probably constituted the darkest period of the Kurdish history with a rough estimation of Kurdish victims, namely, civilians, reaching some 200,000 people. By the beginning of the 2000s, however, Kurds’ survival as a part of Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Syria and thus, in trans-frontier Kurdistan, seemed to be out of any major threat.



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