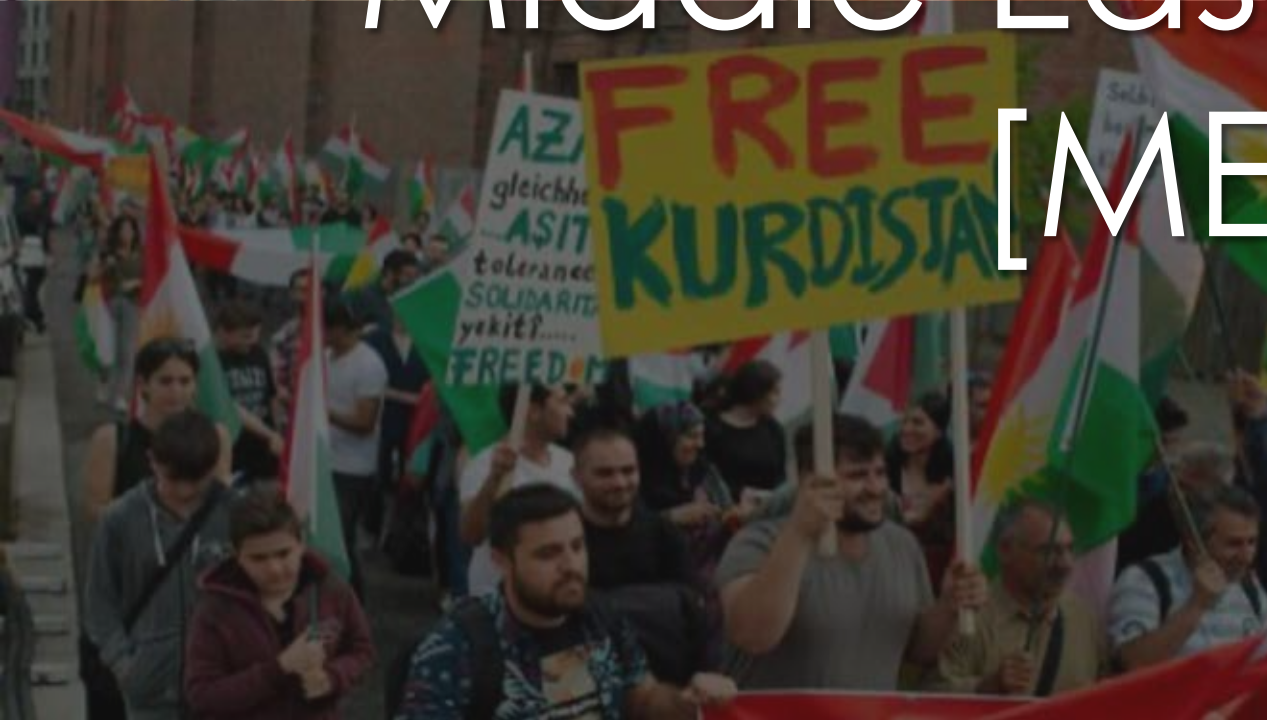




# Ethnic Minorities in the Middle East & N. Africa

## [MENA]





# Ethnic Minorities in the Middle East & N. Africa [MENA]

## □ What are the ethnic minority groups in MENA?

- ▶ There are many indigenous, religious, or long-standing minority ethnic groups include:
- ▶ Arameans, Assyrians, Armenians, Bahrani, Baloch, Coptic, Cappadocian Greeks, Cypriots, Druze, Greeks, Jews, Maronites, Nubians, Chaldeans, and Kurds.



# The Dhimmi

- ▶ When the Arabs conquered the Middle East & N. Africa.
- ▶ they set about the project of **Arabization**.
- ▶ This meant that they **raised the taxes** on **Non-Muslims**, restricted government access for Non-Muslims, and made **Non-Muslims second-class citizens** in an apartheid state.
- ▶ This was called **“the Dhimmi”** or the “Peoples under Protection”.
- ▶ You could escape this second-class status by doing two simple things:





# The Dhimmi

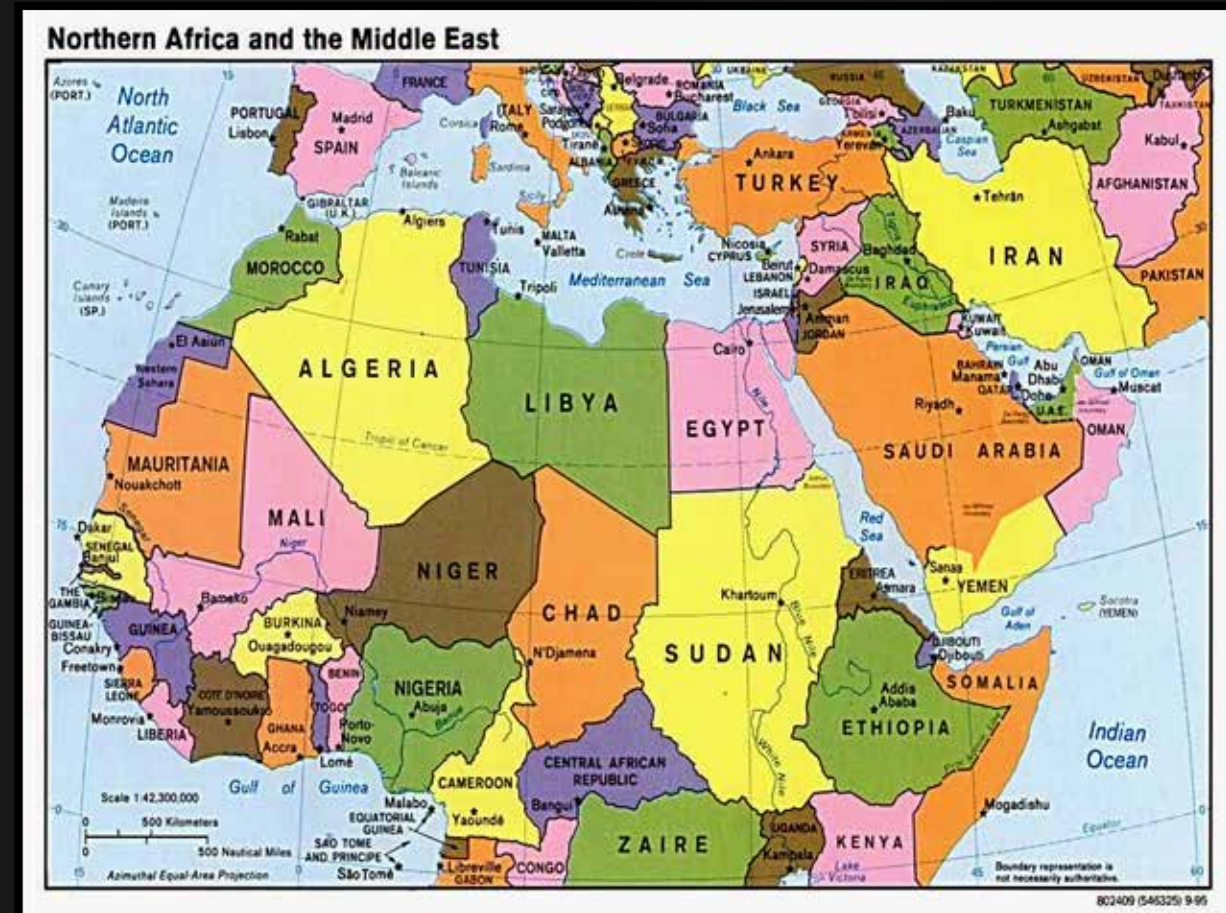
- ▶ (1) switch your prevailing language to Arabic and
- ▶ (2) convert to Islam.
- ▶ You would then become an Arab and **escape** the **Dhimmi status**.
- ▶ Many people took the offer, preferring wealth in this life to preserving their identities as **Christians** or **Jews** or **Zoroastrians** or whatever religion they happened to be before the Islamic Conquest.
- ▶ And so, the variety of ethnicities of the Middle East became absorbed into a **new enlarging Arab ethnicity**.



# Ethnic Minorities in the Middle East & N. Africa (MENA)

□ We will learn about some of them:

1. Coptic Egyptians
2. Assyrians
3. Kurds





# 1. Coptic Egyptians

- The word Coptic means **native Egyptian**.
- All the Coptic are **Christians**.
- Egypt became Christian by the **2<sup>nd</sup> cen. A.D**
- Egypt was completely Christian until the Arab invasion in 642 A.D
- Most of the Coptic are orthodox Byzantine church.
- **Coptics** are the **largest ethno-religious** minority in Egypt and the Middle East, they are **12 million** people.



# Who are the Coptic Christians?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhT6j7XmeWQ>

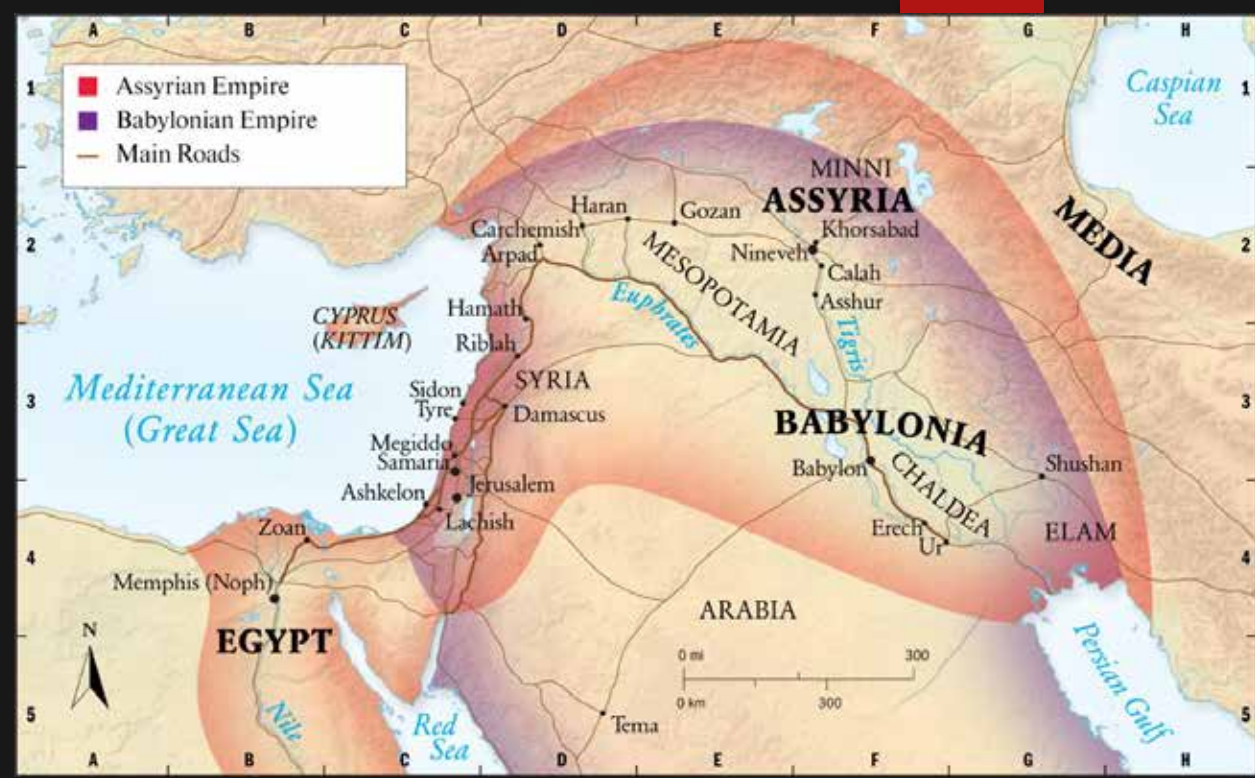
## Copts in Diaspora Worry About Future in Egypt

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2izxMaz3AVs>



# 2. The Assyrians

- The Assyrians of today are the descendants of the ancient Assyrian people.
- They are one of the earliest civilizations emerging in the Middle East and have a history spanning over 4000 years.
- The official language of the Assyrian churches is Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic, the language Jesus would have spoken.



**The East Syriac (Aramaic) dialect**  
 ܐܘܪܝܝܢܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܝܐ

ܕܢܝܢܘܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܩܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܝܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܩܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܝܐ  
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## 2. The Assyrians

- **Assyrians** are not Arabian or Arabs, and their religion is not Islam.
- Assyrians are known as Syriacs, they are predominately **Christians**.
- Most of the world's 2-4 million Assyrians live around their traditional homeland, which comprises parts of **northern Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran**.
- Assyrians have been the victims of persecution for centuries, including the **Assyrian genocide**, in which the **Ottomans** killed at least **250,000** Assyrians during **World War I**.





## 2. The Assyrians

- In recent years, many have fled to neighboring countries to escape persecution from **Islamists militias** during the **Iraq War** and, most recently, by the terrorist group **ISIS**.
- Members of the Assyrian diaspora are spread-out all-over world, including roughly **100,000** in the **United States**, according to U.S. Census Bureau survey.
- Iraqi Assyrians have faced increased persecution following the **U.S.-led** invasion in **2003**,
- -including attacks on Assyrian churches – some estimate that **60 %** of Iraqi Assyrians have **fled** the country since the **Iraq War** began.





# 3- The Kurds/Kurdish

- The Kurds are one of the indigenous peoples of the Mesopotamian plains and the highlands,
- In what are now south-eastern **Turkey**, north-eastern **Syria**, northern **Iraq**, north-western **Iran** and south-western **Armenia**.
- Between **15 to 20 million** Kurds, They make up one of ethnic group in the Middle East, but they have never obtained a permanent nation state.





### 3. The Kurds/Kurdish

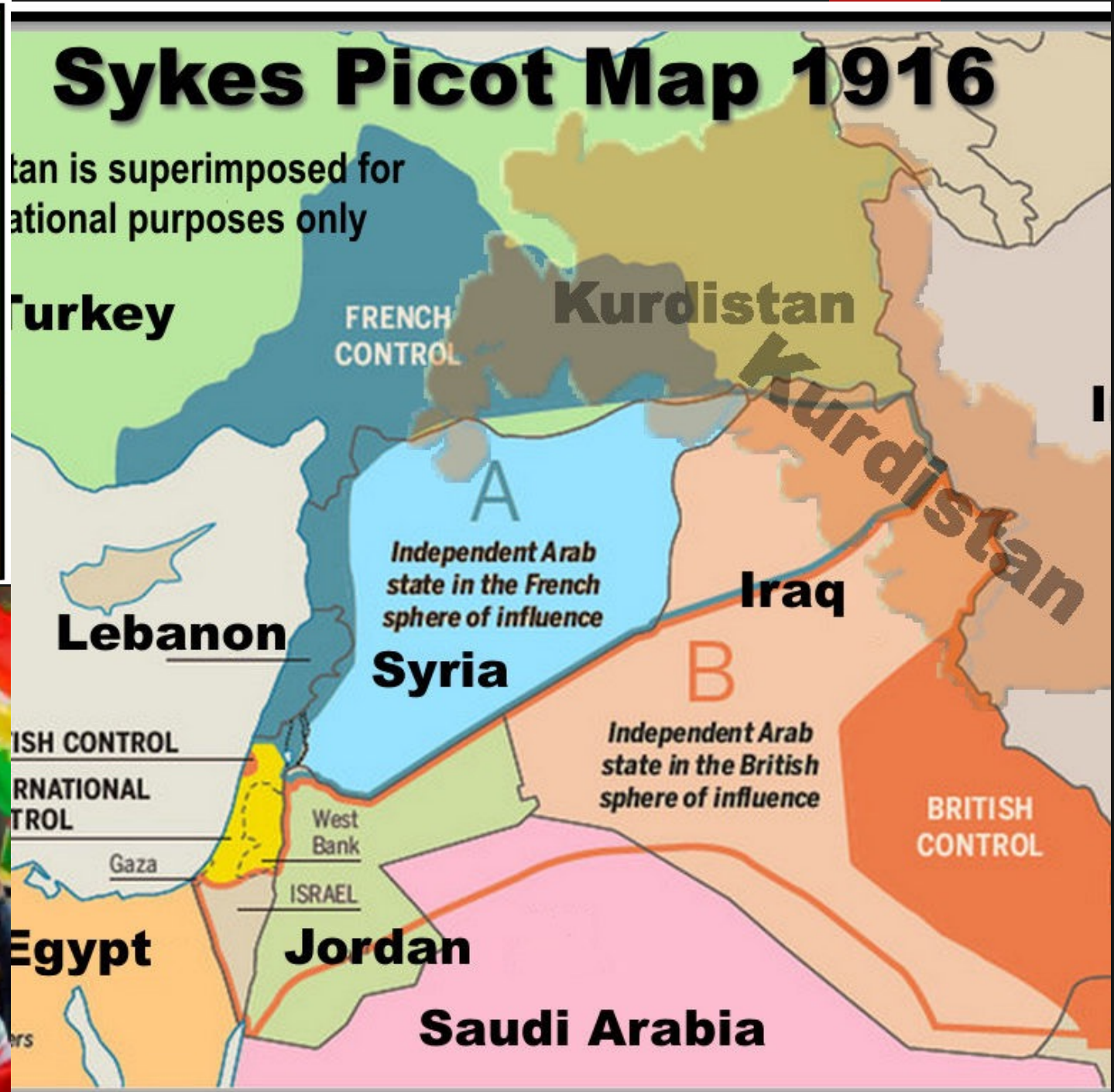
- Most Kurds are **Sunni Muslims**, and among them are many who practice Sufism and other mystical sects.
- The principal unit in traditional Kurdish society was the tribe, typically led by a **sheikh** or an **Aga**, whose rule was firm.





# WHO ARE THE KURDS?







Good luck!

