



★ Being Kurdish in a Hostile World

Ayub Nuri

University of Regina Press (Sep 16, 2017)

Softcover \$21.95 (350pp)

978-0-88977-494-0

A moving insider's account of Kurdish conflicts, Nuri's work captures a truth more devastating than fiction.

Journalist Ayub Nuri's war memoir *Being Kurdish in a Hostile World* chronicles a life lived in conflict.

Spanning from the 1970s through the 2010s, the book navigates a maelstrom of tragedy, perseverance, and self-determination as Nuri grows up, lives, and works as a Kurd in Iraq. Deft, heartbreaking, and deeply thoughtful, this book is the desperately needed firsthand account of a people and a place often rendered invisible or ignored by the West.

Nuri was a child during the Iran-Iraq War when shrapnel took out his knee. Land rich but often cash poor, his family navigated refugee camps, the devastating chemical attacks of 1988, and years of starvation.

Nonetheless, Nuri achieved an education in English, just in time to work as a translator during the United States invasion of Iraq. Equally devastating, he was present for the aftermath and saw the Kurdish Autonomous Zone seize its own resources and achieve yearned-for progress, only to be swept back into brutal conflict with ISIS.

A life of phenomenal hardship and frequent national and international indifference made Nuri look outward, rather than turning inward. His knowledge of the West, and of its general ignorance to his world, is excellent. He's an able guide who swiftly orients his audience to centuries of ideological conflicts moored in religious, tribal, and geographic divides.

Proudly Kurdish, Nuri stands as an advocate for an autonomous Kurdish state—but he is not a blind adherent. As he moves through years of dictatorship and comes into contact with various peoples, he learns to understand the ways that tyranny pits the disenfranchised against each other.

Still, Nuri is careful to draw the line between cause-and-effect and systemic acceptance. He interrogates tensions within the Kurdish community, as well as changes in his own opinions, as the tides of conflict wax and wane.

Being Kurdish in a Hostile World is cinematic in scope, though saying so almost does a disservice to the very real life of Ayub Nuri. A moving insider's account, Nuri's work captures a truth more devastating than fiction.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (September/October 2017)

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