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EDITORIAL | Marlene Schäfers¹

In his editorial for last year's May issue of *Kurdish Studies*, founding editor Prof. Ibrahim Sirkeci noted how navigating the "highly contested and politically charged field" of Kurdish studies required impartiality and a commitment to academic integrity on the part of the journal. Yet our professed impartiality does not mean that we stand aloof from social and political developments, nor that our editorial work is not guided by a number of moral, political and academic principles. As the leading scholarly journal in the field of Kurdish studies, we are aware of the role that the journal plays in creating structures of visibility, shaping knowledge production and, not least, influencing careers. We therefore believe that the recent discussion on male violence and sexual harassment in Kurdish studies, which was initiated by the publication of an anonymous letter via the Kurdish Studies Network, is of direct significance to the journal. It has initiated a discussion that was, in many ways, long overdue, both for the field as a whole and for our journal.

Here, we would like to express our full solidarity with the anonymous women who circulated the letter and declare our support for their call to stop violence against women in Kurdish studies. As editors, the letter and the action plan that followed it have pushed us to reflect in more sustained and explicit ways on the dynamics of gender, class and race in our publishing practices. We are committed to supporting the struggle to a more gender-balanced and just field of knowledge production. To this end, we are currently reviewing the composition of our editorial board and look forward to recruiting committed female Kurdish scholars to our team of editors and to working with them as reviewers. We also look forward to giving more visibility to the work of our female Kurdish colleagues and invite the submission of manuscripts and/or special issue proposals that investigate women's role in Kurdish society, politics and history, employ the theories and methods of critical gender and sexuality studies in their analyses, and shed light on the gendered forms of knowledge production that prevail within Kurdish studies. Our previous special issue on "Women and War in

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Kurdistan" (*Kurdish Studies* 6(1), 2018) already provided a platform to address related issues and we are excited to further expand such engagements in the future.

The current issue brings you a rich and wide-ranging collection of excellent articles. It opens with Metin Atmaca's interview with David McDowall, author of one of the key reference texts in Kurdish studies, *A Modern History of the Kurds*. With a new, extended version of the book about to be released, McDowall sheds light on the making of this landmark publication and reflects on the changing dynamics of the Kurdish question.

Next, Ronay Bakan's article provides a fine-grained analysis of the socio-spatial dynamics of urban warfare in the Kurdish region of Turkey. Focusing on the 2015 armed conflict in Suriçi, Diyarbakır, Bakan deftly shows how the spatial characteristics of the urban built environment and the social relations they encouraged played a key role in the unfolding of military conflict. Her article highlights the need to take material and spatial aspects seriously in our analyses of the political.

Hazal Hürman's contribution, too, focuses on the Kurdish regions in Turkey, yet moves into the realm of the law. Hers is an ethnographic account of the way in which Kurdish children come into contact with and experience the law as they navigate contemporary urban spaces in Turkey. Hürman provides a striking analysis of how the state effectively abandons children tried under the terms of its anti-terror legislation and how this in turn encourages other social actors to sanction, punish and survey Kurdish children in their daily lives.

Michael Knapp and Joost Jongerden follow with a detailed account of the justice system in the autonomously administered region of Rojava in north and east Syria. They show how the peace committees and platforms that have been institutionalised in the region form an integral part of the model of self-administration promoted by the Kurdish movement and how "doing justice" forms part of a broader project to remake society.

Cihan Erdost Akin's contribution retains the focus on Rojava, yet turns to the ways in which the Kurdish self-administration is perceived and portrayed in Western media. His analysis reveals how the discursive framing of Rojava as either revolution or separatist rebellion remains limited by hegemonic imaginations of the state, rendering an alternative to capitalism and the nation-state unthinkable.

David Romano takes us to the neighbouring Kurdish Region of Iraq, where he investigates the factors that shape the Kurdish Regional Government's (KRG) foreign policy making. Romano finds that the degree of regime consolidation plays a crucial role in how sub-state actors like the KRG act

politically, showing how the recent decline in unity and consolidation of the Kurdish government has led to more risky foreign policies. His insights have relevance beyond the KRG alone and provide a useful point of comparison with other para and sub-state contexts.

Finally, Martin van Bruinessen's article reviews three recent publications on Alevi and Zaza communities in Turkey. Questions of linguistic, religious and political identity feature strongly in these books, complicating and nuancing our understanding of Kurdishness and Kurdish identity.

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