

from the office of

*Senator Edward M. Kennedy
of Massachusetts*

MESSAGE OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY
THE KURDS: HUMAN RIGHTS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY
AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
PARIS, FRANCE
OCTOBER 14, 1989

I wish I could be with you today as you gather to advance the cause of human rights and cultural preservation of the Kurds.

Let me first commend one dedicated individual whose persistent efforts have made this important conference a reality -- Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand. I am confident that the Kurdish Institute of Paris will serve as a beacon of hope to the millions of Kurds around the world who seek a brighter, and just future. I share with each of you here today your abiding commitment to advance the cause of the Kurdish people. We must join together in advancing the cause of justice and respect for human rights for the Kurdish people.

The Kurds are heir to one of the oldest, richest cultures in human history. Dating back to the Medes, their culture has given birth to writers, philosophers, great musicians and poets who have enriched many nations across the earth. Yet time and time again, this priceless culture has been threatened by forces much more powerful.

Far too often throughout history, the Kurds have been treated as pawns in regional conflicts, their people have been persecuted and their culture repressed. Earlier this year, the Iraqi Government began a massive campaign to relocate by force tens of thousands of Kurds in northern Iraq to other parts of the country. Last year, thousands of Kurds died from the poison gas attacks by Iraq and thousands more had to flee to Turkey, Iran and Syria.

The Kurdish people have suffered far too much for far too long. We must rededicate ourselves to ending the suffering the Kurdish people have endured, to ensuring the respect of human rights, and to raising global awareness of their plight -- the Kurds must not be forgotten.

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