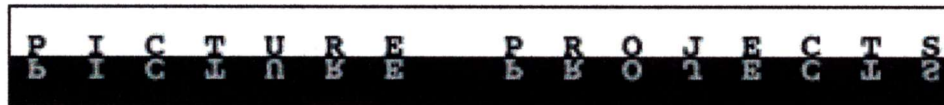


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www.akaKURDISTAN.com

Magnum photographer, Susan Meiselas joins the online documentary company, Picture Projects, to announce the launch of akaKURDISTAN, an interactive website that invites contributions from Kurds, historians, photographers, archivists and travelers to build an online archive of collective memory.

Just after the Gulf War in 1991, Meiselas joined a group of forensic scientists sent by Human Rights Watch to exhume a mass grave in Koreme, a village in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. That was the beginning of Meiselas' six-year effort to collect material from around the world, in order to visually represent the complex history of the Kurdish people. The result, *Kurdistan in the Shadow of History* (Random House 1997) is a stunning, 400-page, 4-color book of photographs and historical documents dating from the 1880's to the present.

Today, there are more than 20 million Kurds worldwide, the largest ethnic population without a homeland. In some countries, Kurds are jailed for speaking their language, or even carrying a photograph revealing their culture. As a result, hundreds of invaluable photographs have been confiscated, destroyed and even buried in backyards. The borderless space of the world wide web allows this dispersed people without a nation, and thus no central archive, to safely and anonymously add their personal stories to Kurdish history.

Even as Meiselas' book was going to press, letters and photographs continued to stream into her studio from people eager to contribute. In an effort to create an ongoing exchange, Meiselas began working with Picture Projects. Together they built akaKURDISTAN which invites visitors to **explore** photographs and memoirs via a timeline and map; help **identify** photographs, names and places in the Unknown Image Archive; and **add stories** to this online collection.

This website is now featured as part of an exhibition of material from Meiselas' book. Currently at Impressions Gallery in York, England, the show will travel throughout Europe during 1998. The exhibit includes access to the website as well as a dedicated computer workstation where Kurds within these communities can scan and upload their images to **akaKURDISTAN**.

Partial support of this site was provided by The Rockefeller Foundations' Multi-Media Fellowship and the Internet Regional Program of the Open Society Institute of the Tides Foundation.

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