

Six Songs

Suna Alan

Illustration: Hannah Kirmes-Daly

The following are six songs from the Kurdish repertoire that Suna Alan has performed during the past ten years. The first is a song that she wrote herself.



1. Nadia

Lyrics & Music: Suna Alan

Recording on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/9jVUJFOASKU>

Translation

Oh mother, I can't hear your voice
I have fallen into a deep well, a dark well, give a voice!
Life was dark, freedom was far away, I was wounded
Life was dark, freedom was far away, death was better

Far away, far away your eyes!
Far away, far away your eyes!

Oh mother, I woke up from a dream
The sound of your voice and your laughter are in my ears
I am Nadia, your gazelle, the red poppy of Shingal
I was a happy child; I grew up in happiness

Closer, your voice is closer; closer, hope is closer
Closer, your eyes are closer; closer, a bright future is closer

Original: Kurdish – Kurmanji

NADIA

Lê lê lê dayê, dengê te nayê
Lê dayê ketim bîra kûr, bîra reş, deng bide!
Jiyan tarî, azadî dûr, brinîdar bûm lê daye
Jiyan tarî, azadî dûr, mirin xweş bû lê daye
Dûr e dûr, dûr e dûr çavên te!
Dûr e dûr, dûr e dûr çavên te!

Lê lê lê dayê rabûm li xewnê
Te bang dikir navê min, kena te li bîra min
Ez im Nadia, xezala te, gulê bûka Şingal ê
Zarokek dilgeş bûm ez, mezin bûm di nav şadî
Nêz e nêz, dengê te, nêz e nêz hêvî!
Nêz e nêz, çavên te, nêz e nêz ronahî!

Note: The Yazidi Kurdish activist Nadia Murad was kidnapped from her village during the genocide perpetrated by ISIS members (also known as Daesh) in 2014, together with hundreds of other women, and remained in captivity for months. Nadia Murad was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, wrote a book, and became a UN Goodwill Ambassador.

2. Canda

Lyrics & Music: Anonymous

Region: Êlih (officially Batman) / Northern Kurdistan (officially Turkey)

Recording on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/P43wFdvdYQ8>

This is a lament sung by a woman who left her hometown Êlih (Batman) to marry her husband in Colemerg (officially Hakkari). However her husband goes to Iran for an illegal trade (such as tobacco, tea or petrol) and does not return for years. She explains the pain of waiting her husband. The rumour is that the woman gives up her hope that her husband will return home one day and she returns to Êlih. Another rumour is that she waits for her husband but her husband never returns to village again.

Translation:

You promised to come today
Night is over, my dear, you have not come
I waited again, until the morning call of the prayer from the mosque
I've kept you in my heart for three years
You rip my heart out of me
Everyone in our village knows
Three years I waited for you

Original: Kurdish – Kurmanji

Canda, tu gul ba biçanda
Te sozek wê roja han da
Şev çû canê tu nehatî
Ez mam heya mele bang da

Tirsim ya dil bêjim hîna,
ew dil lo li ba min tina
Tiştê bi serê min hatina
Him ditirsim him newêrim

Canda, can bi te dispêrim
Têr nabim çendî binêrim
Te divêm û nikarim bêjim
Te di nava dil da vedişêrim

Sê sal mi dil da hilañ
Te dil ji navam derañ
Herkes li gundê me dizañ
Ku sê sal ez li benda te mam

Canda, tu gul ba biçanda
Te sozek wê roja han da
Şev çû canê tu nehatî
Ez mam heya mele bang da...

3. Çiya bilind in, te nabinim- Kurmanji

[The mountains are high; I can't see you]

Lyrics & Music: Anonymous

Region: Agirî (officially Agri) / Northern Kurdistan (officially Turkey)

Recording on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/s9uVXTJWeEU>

This is a lament sung by a man, whose 7 brothers were killed by the brothers of his fiancée during a fight between the two villages in Agirî due to land share disputes in the highland. He expresses the pain of his brothers and his fiancée, a pain that he has not been able to forget despite the intervening years.

Translation:

The mountains are high
I cannot see you
The roses have turned to red
I cannot pick them
The girls of my dear father's house in the village are beautiful
They have melted the hearts of the young men of our village

Original: Kurdish –Kurmanji

Lê lê dînê çîya bilind in.
Te nabînim, te nabinim, te nabînim.
Hey lê dînê min got gul sor bûnê.
Ez naçirpînim.
Wey lê dînê min got
qîzên mala bavê min bedew in
Wey la dînê min got
xortên gundê me, me helandin.

4. Heyder Heyder

Lyrics & Music: Anonymous

Region: Dêrsim (officially Tunceli) / Northern Kurdistan (Turkey)

Recording on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/bWkMpP2-uTw>

This is the story of a village in the Mazgirt district of Dêrsim, where people from the Demenan tribe lived. Heyder, is a wise man who is loved and respected. He writes poetry, plays the *tembûr* and sings.

During the Dersim massacre in 1938, it was time for his village. The soldiers enter the village and start burning. On the other hand, every living creature escaping from left to right is struck by a rain of bullets. Heyder has three sons and a wife as wise as himself.

He loses sight of his three sons, but he is not willing to leave his wife, who has a bullet wound, alone in the flames. The old man takes his wife on his back and climbs up the slopes of a mountain. He takes refuge in a cave with his wife, but her condition is very bad. He cannot do anything to heal her wounds. At the same time he wants to know what has happened to his children.

He thinks that he won't be able to sit there and hide and do anything. He decides to go back to the village, hoping to find a medicine that will cure his wife's wounds and find his children. When Heyder comes to the village, he hears the sound of laments, sees the burning houses and the smell of human corpses fill his lungs. He finds and buries the lifeless bodies of his two eldest sons among the corpses stacked on top of each other in the village square. He learns from his neighbours that his young son took refuge in a cave on another mountain in that region with a family. He starts looking for his son without thinking and finally finds him alive. Taking his son, he travels to the cave where he hid his wife, but Heyder's wife is no longer alive when they arrive. Heyder leans over his wife and reads a poem in Kurdish. This poem will be the last word that Heyder will speak, for ten years, till the day of his death. Nobody will ever hear him speak again.

Original: Kurdish – Kurmanji

Ya Xızırê kelek û gemiyan
Ya Ewliyaye esman û çıyan
Ya siware hespe xewnan
Xızır Xızır tu dermane hemu derdan
Xızır Xızır ya Xızır

Ez çûme dere bederan
Ez ketme cenge be çeran
Gula tare me ra bigir
Çel sûware ser xil xeran
Çûme diyare Sewase
Kureyş pe Mansur ve ketne base
Çare me ra begiştana
Ax û cam ax û vexar bi tase

Heyder Heyder, Heyder Heyder [x2]
Heyder Heyder, Derdê Derman
Me ra bişin Şahê Merdan [x2]

Ew kanîya ji kewire
Çil bacîyan av li birê
Gula carê me ra bike
Sultan Oli ya Xidirê
Heser Mamûd li bilinde
Abûzer li serê rıyanê
Bende pıran ax û canê
Ji derdan re ew dermanê

Heyder Heyder, Heyder Heyder [x2]
Heyder Heyder, Derdê Derman
Me ra bişin Şahê Merdan [x2]

5. Zembilfiroş

[Zembeel-firosh – Basket-Seller]

Lyrics & Music: Anonymous

Region: Amed (officially Diyarbakir) / Northern Kurdistan

Recording on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/yXeZsXUk6wI>

This is a ‘Rejection of Love’ story. An unrequited love. The story takes place in Farqîn (officially Silvan) district of Amed.

Zembilfiroş is a wise person who has given up the blessings of the world. He is a man who tries to make a living by wandering around selling baskets. As he wanders, his path happens to pass to Farqîn (Silvan). Zembilfiroş draws the attention of Xatûn (Khatoun), the wife of Farqîn Beg (ruler). She is struck by love at first sight and she declares her love. But Zembilfiroş rejects Xatûn's love. Xatûn does not accept the rejection and after this point Zembilfiroş becomes desperate and begs God to take his life. When he dies, Xatûn makes the same wish, and both die.

Translation:

Xatûn: "My eyes are like mirrors
Lovelocks of my hair are like silk
My teeth are like pearls
My chest is like a highland"

Zembîlfiroş: "Xatûn with beaded necklace
It can't be by force
My fear is of God above.

Xatûn I am repentant
I'm repentant to old Zoroaster
I can't give up my repentance"

Original: Kurdish – Kurmanji

ZEMBÎLFİROŞ

Zembîlfiroş zembîla tîne
Delalo zembîla tîne
Kolan bi kolan digerîne
Nan û dahnê pê distîne

Xatûn li bircê dibîne
Bi eşqa dil dihebîne
Aqil diçe serda namîne
Aqil diçe serda namîne

Çavên min mîna eynan e
Biskê min mîna qeytan e
Diranê min mîna mircan in
Sîngê min mîna zozan e

Xatûna gerdên bi morî
Qet nabe bi kotek û zorî
Tirsa min ji, wî! Reb ê jorê
Xatûnê ez tobedar im

6. Li Merdine Li Bagoke

Lyrics & Music: Hozan Dilgeş

Recording on YouTube:

https://youtu.be/w0jhSI78_FY

Translation:

At Bagok Mountain in Mardin (province),
a bloody massacre happened.
The battle continued day and night
Long live our Bagok struggle

Bagok Mountain is forested.
Soldiers came there
in their thousands
to fight against a handful of comrades.

The soldiers could not frighten them
They fought very bravely
They shook Bagok Mountain
and wrote the story of their bravery
in golden letters

Bagok Mountain is renowned.
Blood was spilled like water.
Long live the partisans
A hundred-times
salute to those martyrs

Original: Kurdish – Kurmanji

LÎ MÊRDÎNÊ LÎ BAGOKÊ

Li Mêrdînê li Bagokê
Xwin herikî wek cûhokê
Şer dewamkir şev û rokê
Biji şerê me li Bagokê
Biji biji şerê me li Bagokê

Çiyayê bagokê bi dare
Leşker hat ser bi hezare
Li wir bûbû axir dewran
Li ser serê çend hevalan

Çav ji dujmin ne şikandin
Şer xweş kirin xemilandin
Çiyayê Bagokê hejandin
Dirok bi zêr neqîşandin

Çiyayê Bagokê bi nave
Xwîn herikî weke ave
Bijîn bijîn ey partîzan
Li wan şehîdan sed silave

Heval Delil bûbû rêber
Xwişka Ayten eriş bir ser
Leşker hat sed bi hezaran
Heval kuştin gelek leşker

Note:

“Li Bagoke” is a Kurdish liberation song. It commemorates a historical event which took place in Turkey in 1988. We have included it because the woman named in the song – Ayten Tekin (code name Rojin) – was one of Suna’s aunts. The following is an account of the events that we have taken from the Internet:

In April 1988, 20 fighters, members of the People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan (ARGK) lost their lives after they put up a big fight against the Turkish army. The battle took place at Bagok mountain. It was the greatest conflict involving the Turkish military and the ARGK fighters, who found themselves encircled by thousands of soldiers and village guards (*korucu*). It was perhaps the first major battle of the pro-Ocalan forces.

On 31 March thousands of Turkish military personnel were deployed against the guerrillas positioned in the lower part of Bagok mountain, to the north of Nusaybin. Somebody had informed on them. The soldiers had been deployed to the area from Mardin, Nusaybin and Midyat during the day, completing their preparations during the evening hours for the operation that was planned to take place the next day. Thousands of non-military personnel who knew Bagok were brought to the theatre of operations alongside the Turkish soldiers.

On the morning of 1 April 1988, Turkish troops, supported by helicopters and fighter aircrafts, sent a patrol into Efse village close to Bagok mountain. The soldiers entered at exactly the point where the ARGK guerrillas were positioned. Caught by surprise by the guerrillas' defensive gunfire, they were forced to retreat, sustaining many casualties in the process.

After a short period of panic the Turkish commanders surrounded the area from all sides with thousands of soldiers. Their purpose was to annihilate the ARGK guerrillas in a short period of time under intense fire.

The commander of the ARGK guerrillas was Veli Yasar (code name Delil), who had joined PKK while involved in political activity.

He was an experienced guerrilla who had taken part in many battles. At this time he was actually on his way to Garzan, which was his own area of activity. However, he had taken on the task of training newly-recruited ARGK fighters in Mardin before going to Garzan. He trained 30 new recruits in 45 days.

The area encircled by the Turkish army was where the recruits had been training with the ARGK. The guerrilla units had just completed the ceremony of the oath of allegiance, and had not yet left the area.

Delil was accompanied by Mustafa Kaplan (code name Kazim) and 18 new ARGK fighters. This was the group encountered by the initial Turkish patrol. The other guerrilla groups took advantage of the panic of the soldiers and fought their way out of the area of operation. In a sense, the group led by Delil sacrificed themselves for the other ARGK fighters. The group also included Ayten Tekin (Rojin) from Bingol-Karlioiva, who had joined PKK only 23 days previously.
