World Regional Geography Activity Module 5: Ethnicity in Southwest Asia and North Africa

Name: Luke Pepin Names of Group Members:

In this exercise, you will examine how different ethnic groups are distributed in Southwest Asia and North Africa and identify some of their characteristics. As you explore these groups, note that in many cases an ethnic group is not spatially limited to one nation and in some cases, they don’t even follow a single religion. Note also that threats to ethnic minorities are at the root of conflicts in many parts of the world (not just this region).

Gather in a group of five. Divide the following ethnic groups within your group so each person researches one. Have each group member fill in their row of the table below to answer the questions about their ethnic group. You may want to use a Google Doc or other shared document so everyone can work simultaneously. If you are on a phone, we recommend you use the phone for research and write your notes down to later transcribe to the group document. When the table is complete, discuss the questions below and provide a group answer. Make sure each group member has the link to the group document. Each group member will create their own document in Word or PDF format to post to the submission site on HuskyCT.

Questions include:

In what countries can substantial populations of this ethnicity be found?

What religion or religions are commonly practiced by people of this ethnicity (be specific – e.g. Sufi Muslim as opposed to just Muslim)?

What are 2-3 cultural characteristics that help to identify people of this ethnicity

In what ways is this ethnic group threatened or in conflict?

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| Ethnic Group | Countries where found | Religion(s) practiced | Cultural Characteristics | Threats |
| Touareg | Niger, Mali, Algeria, Libya | Sunni Islam (with some traditional animist beliefs) | Nomadic lifestyle, distinctive clothing (such as indigo-dyed clothing), camel herding | Conflict with governments over land rights, marginalization, and discrimination |
| Bedouin | Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Egypt | Sunni Islam | Nomadic lifestyle, strong tribal affiliations, hospitality culture | Displacement due to urbanization and modernization, marginalization by governments, loss of traditional way of life |
| Armenian | Armenia, diaspora communities worldwide (e.g., United States, Russia, France) | Armenian Apostolic Church (Christianity) | Rich cultural heritage including traditional dances, music, and cuisine, strong family ties | Historical persecution and genocide (e.g., Armenian Genocide), territorial conflicts with neighboring countries |
| Copts | Egypt, diaspora communities worldwide | Coptic Orthodox Christianity | Ancient Egyptian cultural influences, distinctive language (Coptic), strong sense of identity | Discrimination and persecution by the majority Muslim population, attacks on churches and religious institutions |
| Kurd | Kurdistan region (parts of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria), diaspora communities worldwide | Sunni Islam, Shia Islam, Yazidism, Christianity, Yarsanism | Strong sense of Kurdish identity, Kurdish language and culture, traditional Kurdish clothing and music | Suppression of Kurdish language and culture by governments, political marginalization, ethnic violence and conflict |

As mentioned in the book, many of the borders in this region were drawn by Europeans following the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. In what ways have the borders that were artificially set from outside either mitigated or enhanced the potential for conflict in Southwest Asia and North Africa?

The artificial borders drawn by Europeans often disregarded existing ethnic, religious, and tribal divisions, leading to the creation of nation-states with diverse populations. This has exacerbated tensions and conflicts as marginalized groups seek autonomy or independence, leading to ongoing struggles for control over territory and resources.

Provide one example from the list of ethnic groups above of how borders drawn by outsiders have caused problems for that group?

The Kurds have been divided among several countries (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria) due to the arbitrary borders drawn by outsiders, limiting their ability to form a cohesive nation-state and leading to ongoing conflict and repression in each respective country.