

# Kurdish Poet Warns of Decline of Kurdish Language

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Kurdish poet Abdullah Pashew during his seminar in Sulaimani city. Photo Rudaw.

SULAIMANI, Kurdistan Region – Last week, the University of Sulaimani organized a seminar for Kurdish poet Abdulla Pashew. The auditorium was packed with people, mostly university students and professors. As soon as Pashew entered,

everybody started chanting and applauding.

A university student from the college gave a brief opening speech, saying, “It is an honor to have Abdulla Pashew here today. It is our privilege to be able to organize this seminar for him.” Pashew struggled to reach the stage as everyone wanted to pose for a picture with him.

Many weren’t able to attend the seminar due to lack of space inside the auditorium.

Tavga, a student, said, “I have been counting down the days until this seminar to meet Pashew in person.” However, Tavga was disappointed by the small size of the auditorium and the large number of people who showed up. She hoped Pashew would have more seminars in Sulaimani in the future.

Pashew opened the seminar by saying, “Last time, when I came to Kurdistan, I had my first seminar in Erbil, so I said to myself I have to have my first seminar in Sulaimani this time but, unfortunately, that didn’t happen.”

During the seminar, Pashew was constantly interrupted by the audience applause. Every once in a while, someone in the crowd would shout, “We love you!”

Unlike previous seminars where Pashew mostly read poems, this visit to the Kurdistan Region was to discuss national issues. Pashew chose to speak about the important issue of language. He is concerned that the Kurdish language is becoming extinct.

Pashew said, “When a language becomes extinct, everything else becomes extinct along with it. A nation and its country will not last without a language.”

He added, "I am concerned that we will not understand each other in the next few years as the words of Kurdish language are dying out."

Pashew discussed the style of the writing on store signs and in school books, newspapers and magazines. He also discussed the government's negligence toward language. Pashew discussed the urgency of creating an academic Kurdish language center in Sulaimani.

Haval Abubakr, a university professor, shed tears listening to Pashew. He told *Rudaw*, "As much as I enjoyed the seminar, I was also depressed. Honestly, his concerns were directed at us, not just the government and authorities."

Abubakr added, "The great thing about this poet is that his poems and words about language and nationality complete one another. He is not just a great poet, but a linguist as well."

Sherko Bekas, another famous Kurdish poet, was unable to attend the seminar, but he told *Rudaw*, "Pashew is one of the great poets who cares so much about the Kurdish language. Pashew himself is an expert in the Kurdish language."

Bekas also said, "The young poets must understand Pashew in order to learn and understand the Kurdish language well."

After 40 minutes discussing national and language issues, Pashew concluded the seminar by reading some of his poems. The crowd continued to chant and applaud for him.