

Standard for transcription from Kurdish into Norwegian

کوردی – نه رویجی

Introduction

This standard mainly applies to the transcription of place names and proper names from Kurdish written in Arabic-derived script into Norwegian.

Kurdish belongs to the north-western Iranian branch of the Indo-European languages and is closely related to Persian. The language is currently only recognised as an official language in Iraq, but Kurdish is also the native language of large parts of the population in Turkey, Syria, Iran, as well as a significant number of people in the Caucasus region. The vast majority of Kurdish speakers are bilingual, which is a significant reason why Kurdish has a considerable vocabulary of loanwords from Turkish, Arabic and Persian. The language is divided into numerous dialects, and the division is disputed among linguists. The largest branch of Kurdish can be classified as two main dialects:

- *Kurmanji (badini, badiani)*, traditionally spoken in large parts of Turkey, in Syria's north-western and north-eastern districts, in the Caucasus, in Turkmenistan, in the Iranian provinces of Khurasan, Golestan and Western Azerbaijan, and in Iraq's north-western provinces Musul and Duhok.
- *Sorani*, traditionally spoken in Iran's western provinces and in the provinces of Erbil, Sulemaniya and Kirkuk in Iraq.

In addition to these two main dialects, a number of dialects are more prevalent, such as *Gorani*, which is spoken in the area predominantly in the area around Kermanshah in Iran, with the sub-dialect Awromani/Hewramani in the border area between Iran and Iraq, *Mukri*, which is spoken south of Lake Urmia in north-western Iran, and *Zaza* (also known as *Zazaki* and *Dimli*), which is spoken in the eastern part of Turkey.

With the exception of the Caucasus region and Turkey, where Kurdish is written using Cyrillic and Latin script, respectively, Kurdish uses a modified form of the Arabic alphabet. The Kurdish alphabet has five letters that are not found in Arabic, while some non-alphabetic characters common in Arabic are rarely or never used in Kurdish.

The standard has been developed by ***

General principles

Transcriptions of Kurdish using Latin script are often rendered in a haphazard and inconsistent manner. This standard is intended to introduce a number of principles that should be easy to implement in practice when rendering Kurdish words and names in Norwegian.

Unlike most Western European languages, there is a one-to-one relationship between characters and sounds in Kurdish. Written Kurdish therefore does not use combinations of characters to produce a single sound. As mentioned, Kurdish is usually written using a modified version of the Arabic alphabet, with occasional pronunciation that deviates from Arabic and with five extra letters. The pronunciation of some characters varies regionally, but this variation is typically not indicated in writing, in the same way that a retroflex flap is written *l* in Norwegian, regardless of how people pronounce it.

The Latin characters used for transcribing Kurdish into Norwegian can all be found on a standard Norwegian keyboard. In order to produce a transcription that can be used with a standard Norwegian character set, diacritics or letters that are not part of the Norwegian alphabet should not be used.

It is a prerequisite that the names transcribed according to the standard are recognisable to those they concern. This consideration suggests that special Nordic spellings should be avoided, both in terms of vowels and fricatives. The fact that names, when transcribed into Norwegian, should be recognisable to our European partners and to authorities in the applicants' home country supports the same approach. At the same time, it is important that names transcribed according to the standard work as well as possible in the Norwegian language community.

More advanced transcription follows a reversible system, meaning that it should be possible to transcribe each individual character back to the original script without modification. The Latin set of characters is therefore expanded using various diacritics to indicate precisely which Arabic character is referenced. This standard is a tool to be used by the Norwegian public administration when transcribing Kurdish into Norwegian, not the other way round. In that regard, it is therefore not problematic to transcribe without using such characters.

Consonants

A number of Kurdish consonants have the same pronunciation, and these are therefore transcribed into Norwegian using one and the same Latin character.

Kurdish characters rendered using the same Latin character:

s	ث, س
z	ذ, ز

Some Kurdish characters are rendered using a combination of two letters in Latin script, the second always being *h*. ش is represented using *sh*, which is also found in a number of loanwords in Norwegian (*sherry, shipping, shoppe, shorts, show*). Otherwise, *kh* is pronounced as in the German *ach*, *gh* as a uvular trill (guttural *r*), *ch* as in the Spanish *mucho*, and *zh* as in the French pronunciation of the name *Jean*.

For *sh* and *zh*, the relationship between the unvoiced *s* and *sh* is therefore equivalent to the relationship between the voiced *z* and *zh*. For *kh* and *gh*, the relationship between the unvoiced *k* and *kh* is equivalent to the relationship between the voiced *g* and *gh*.

Kurdish characters rendered using two letters in Latin script:

sh	ش
zh	ژ
kh	خ
gh	غ
ch	چ
ou (only when و is pronounced as part of a diphthong)	و

In transcriptions of Kurdish (as with Arabic), *j* is used to render ج. *J* is already established with this pronunciation in Norwegian in a number of loanwords, such as in the English words *jeans* and *jersey* and the Arabic word *jihad*.

It is worth mentioning that Kurdish, in the same way as other languages written in Arabic script, uses double consonant. The practice is distinct from languages that use Latin script, as instead of writing two consonants consecutively, the symbol ّ (*tashdid*) is used above the letter that is to be pronounced as a double consonant. Examples include names and words such as عبد الله (Abdallah), مُحَمَّد (Muhammad) and مُحَرَّم (Muharram). Consequently, letters with a *tashdid* should be transcribed as a double consonant, with the exception of *sh*, *zh*, *kh*, *gh* and *ch*, i.e. consonants that are already transcribed using two characters in Norwegian. As with short vowels and other diacritical marks, *tashdid* is often omitted in writing. In most cases, the person transcribing must therefore know which names and words should be rendered with a double consonant in Norwegian.

Vowels

In Kurdish, a distinction is made between long and short vowels. The short vowels *a* and *u* are seldom indicated in writing, while the short vowel *e* is written as ^ه. The long vowels *a*, *u* and *i* have their own characters. Transcriptions that use this standard do not distinguish between the short and long *a* or the short and long *u*.

Double vowels are not used in modern Norwegian, which means that long vowels cannot be expressed by doubling the same vowel. One example is the name نور, which is often seen written as *Noor*, but when transcribed into Norwegian becomes *Nur*.

Proper names

A great deal of variation is seen when transcribing proper names, particularly names of Arabic origin.

Arabic first names consisting of two parts, where the second part is preceded by the Arabic definite article, are transcribed as one word to indicate that they are a single and not multiple names. Examples include جمال الدين (Jamaladdin), عبد الكريم (Abdalkarim) and عبد الله (Abdallah). Most other first names are considered independent and are separated in transcription. Examples include محمد علي (Mohammad Ali) and حميد رضا (Hamid Reza). The exception are when these 'independent' names are written as one word, such as حسنعلی (Hassanali), and in certain instances when the person emphasises that the two names are inseparable.

When transcribing surnames, the guiding principle is that, unless it is obvious that the person has two surnames (for example if they have taken both their mother's and father's name), the surname should be written as one word. An example is ئىلخانيزاده (Ilkhanizada)

Names of non-Kurdish and non-Arabic origin are often used in Kurdish-speaking regions. Names that are specific to linguistic minorities should generally be transcribed based on the form registered by the authorities in their home country. Names originating from European languages should follow the spelling in the European language from which they are borrowed. For example, جورج should be transcribed as George and not **Jurj*.

In relation to place names that have acquired an established spelling in Norwegian, that spelling has an equal footing with the spelling derived from this standard. For example, موصل can be transcribed as both *Mosul* and *Musul* in Norwegian, and تركيه as both *Tyrkia* and *Turkie* (Turkey). Where there is no established form in Norwegian, the transcription rules of this standard should be used.

Standard for transcription

Alphabet

Norwegian character	Example		Kurdish character
a	dadga	دادگا	ا
Not indicated	asheq	ئاشق	ئ
b	buzmar	بزمار	ب
p	pasewan	پاسه وان	پ
t	telaq	ته لاق	ت
j	jawan	جوان	ج
ch	chai	چای	چ
h	hemam	حه مام	ح
kh	kharap	خراب	خ
d	dastan	داستان	د
r	dirin	دیرین	ر
r	rish	ریش	ر
z	zalou	زالوو	ز
zh	zhumare	ژماره	ژ
s	sertash	سه رتاش	س
sh	shayet	شایه ت	ش
Not indicated	Abdallah	عبد الله	ع
gh	ghem	قه م	غ
f	falake	فلکه	ف
v	vitamin	ویتامین	ف
q	qawa	قاوه	ق
k	kase	کاسه	ک
g	gosht	گوشت	گ
l	lale	لاله	ل
l	aqel	عاقل	ل
m	mam	مام	م
n	nan	نان	ن
o	zorzan	زورزان	ۆ
w	wefadar	وه فادار	و
ou	tinou	تینوو	وو
h	heret aheng	هه ره ت ناهه نگ	ه, هه, هه, هه

e ¹ – when the last letter of a word, after a consonant, or with the short vowel <i>e</i>	eshkenje	ئە شکە نجه	ه , ه	
a ² – when the last letter of certain words with a short <i>a</i>	na	نه	ه	
e	desbeje	ده سه به جئ		ئ
y – when the first letter of a word and when after or before a vowel	Yaban kayen	يابان كايه ن	ى	ى
i – when followed by a consonant and when at the end of a word	dideni	ديده نى	ى	
a – when the last letter of certain Arabic words	Musa	موسى	ى	

Other characters

Norwegian character	Example		Kurdish character
<i>a</i>	murdan	مردن	ـَ
<i>u</i>	musk	مُسك	ـُ
Double consonant	Muhammad	محمّد	ـِـ
Not indicated	must	مست	ـِـ

¹ When *h* follows a consonant at the end of a word, *h* is silent, so when transcribing, *h* should be dropped and the last letter of the word thus becomes the short vowel *e*.

² When *h* follows a consonant at the end of a word, *h* is silent, so when transcribing, *h* is omitted and the last letter of the word thus becomes the short vowel *a*.