

# in just one land

than the state and, if it means three to four hundred people being killed every day, then I do not want it.

“When Blair and Bush pull their troops out of Iraq, the problem will just get worse.

“They need support until they realise their neighbours have rights as well as themselves.

“As for whether Saddam should have been hanged or not, I think that misses the point.

“The fact is he should have been tried under international and not Iraqi law.

“They don’t respect law and order in Iraq. One day it’s law and the next it’s in the rubbish bin.

“We hoped to have international law to help the Kurds as the Jews did when the Nazis were tried for their atrocities

after the Second World War.

“Saddam Hussein the man doesn’t matter, what matters is that such genocide is prevented from ever happening again.”

■ Kurdish refugees want to tell the rich and troubled history of their past and by doing so hope to raise the profile of people who do not have their own homeland.

Dr Mella, chairman of the Western Kurdistan Association for a decade, said this week: “The Kurds are an ancient people with a past full of political, scientific, literary, artistic and military activities. We want to record as much of this as possible.

“For example, 50 years ago in London, Tawfiq Wahbi wrote a Kurdish-to-English dictionary.

“We’re still trying to track down his relatives; he could have written more than just that one book.”

Kurdistan was dissolved in 1923 when borders in the Middle East were redrawn by the Allied victors of the First World War in the Treaty of Lausanne.

The Kurds found themselves split among Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and, ex-Soviet block countries, the Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

There are estimated to be between 27 and 37 million Kurds in the world, making them the largest nation in the world without a state.

Dr Mella, of King Street, Hammersmith, added: “The boundary changes were seemingly so arbitrary, with the borders jutting off at strange angles that there is the joke that Churchill drew them up when he was drunk – every hiccup sent his pen off in another direction.”

Since then the Kurdish people have created their own state a number of times following revolutions within the countries they live.

The last of these lasted 11 months

from January 1946.

It ended when the Iranians took back the land and executed the leaders.

A picture of the republic’s president, Qazi Mohamed, taken just before his death, features in the association’s collection.

The archive goes back 100 years. A striking photo from 1908 shows the first Western woman in traditional Kurdish dress.

Lynette Lindfield Soane was the wife of Major EB Soane – Kurdistan’s Lawrence of Arabia.

Major Soane was a British spy who learnt the Kurdish language and way of life.

He worked as a servant for a rich family before unveiling his true identity and becoming governor of the region when the British troops moved in to occupy it from 1914-1958.

Other highlights include pictures and information on Mustafa Barzani, leader of the army during the 1946 republic who fought Iraq forces in the mountains of the Iran and Iraq border.

Dr Mella said: “Mustafa Barzani was an Iraqi Kurd who came over to Iran to lead the army, another sign that the Kurds are one nation.”

Mustafa Yamulki, a military general for the Ottoman Empire who refused to become a Turkish citizen after the First World War because he wanted to remain a Kurd, and Layla Zana, a Turkish MP who caused outrage and spent 10 years in prison after taking her oath in the Kurdish language in 1994, are also pictured in the collection.

Dr Mella said: “It is just another example of the repression faced by the Kurds. In my country Syria it’s forbidden to wear traditional Kurdish dress, but I can wear it here in London.”

Anyone who can add to the archive or wants to find out more should phone the Western Kurdistan Association on 020 8748 7874 or e-mail [wka@knc.org.uk](mailto:wka@knc.org.uk)



Former partisan fighter Dr Jawad Mella.

Picture by Shane Dempsey SD1418N



A Kurdish woman takes a break from her chores while her mules graze on the sparse grass.