

ZAZACA

## 21 February International Mother Language Day

**“There are as many languages spoken on a land as the number of butterfly species.” I don’t remember the person who said this but I’m reminded of it whenever the suppression of a language is brought up. The geography that I was born into was a multilingual and multicultural place with people who had different faith. Dersim was where I was born in. Dersim was a garden. Zazaki, Kurdish, Armenian and Turkish were the butterflies of this garden. We grew up in this garden...**

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Our grandfathers have called Zazaki "the language of Hızır." It seems that when our language dies, Hızır and we will both be orphaned. We spoke Zazaki on our lands up until 20-30 years ago. And now? Now they point the finger at people who speak our language. Everybody is concerned with survival; everybody is trying to provide food for their family. Truth be told, they cannot be blamed. Prosperity has been a distant dream for our people. For that, we're going through an auto-assimilation instead of assimilation. We're murdering our own language.

They say, what good does our language do us? Will it feed us? Let it disappear, if that's the way. Let our grandfathers' voices be muffled. Let our grandmothers' cries be in vain. Our children shouldn't learn our language because their Turkish has to be perfect. Our kids may not learn the language, it might disappear completely... So, my brothers, this is the situation of our language. It is worthless on this world. Everybody is pushing and shoving it around. Grandchildren can't understand their grandparents' language. Grannies can't communicate with their grandchildren. Language is a bridge between grandparents and grandkids. It's the continuity of life. This bridge that links past to present is about to collapse. When it does, world will lose one of its colors. A community's cry will be buried in the dark pages of history.

Zazaki was the charm of our geography; it was the key to our mountains. It was the language of wild angels. Our language was the language of the "Pepug" bird. It was the language of our mountains, forests, rocks, snakes, lizards, the sun that rose from the horizon, sweat of peasants, fields of grain...

Every language is beautiful. Every language is blessed. Every language is a witness that keeps record of history. Every language is the voice that comes from the past. Every language is a soul, a life. Every language of this world is a nice melody in the garden that is earth. Every language is a human being. Every language is a river. Language is a country, a life, a history, a community. Language is difference. Language is identity. We exist with our language and it does with us. We should claim our language and be advocates for it. Our language shouldn't die. That would be a shame; that would be a sin. What would happen when our language disappears, what would we do?