



ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE



Focus on Arabic Speakers

These Arabic speaking countries have been represented at JSRCC:

Algeria, Egypt, Eritrea, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates and Yemen



Did you know that for some Middle Easterners

- displaying the sole of one's foot or touching somebody with one's shoe is often considered rude? This includes sitting with one's feet or foot elevated.
- pointing the foot at someone is considered an insult as the foot is the dirtiest and lowest part of the body?
- the left hand is considered unclean and that eating and shaking hands should always be done with the right hand?
- laughter is sometimes used in response to a display of anger or a serious topic?
- smiling after being scolded does not necessarily mean he/she thinks the situation is not serious.
- positioning oneself so the back is not facing another person is customary in Iraq? If a person's back is facing another person, he or she must excuse himself or herself.

(From www.bridgeTEFL.com and *Ethnicity and Tradition in the Middle East* by Craig S. Davis)



ALGERIA

Languages: Arabic (official), Berber, French (still widely used, but not officially)

Religion: Muslim 99%, Christian 1%



EGYPT

Languages: Arabic (official), English and French (widely understood by educated people)

Religion: Muslim (mostly Sunni) 90%, Coptic Christian and other 10%

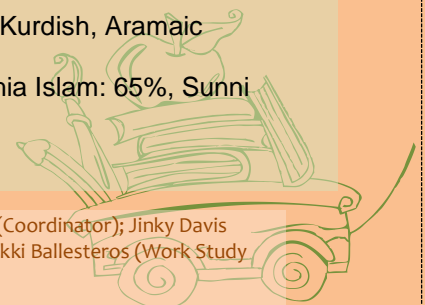


IRAQ

Languages: Arabic, Kurdish, Aramaic

Religion: Muslim (Shia Islam: 65%, Sunni Islam 35%)

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The Arab world (العربى العالم)

refers to Arabic-speaking states, territories and populations in North Africa, Western Asia and elsewhere. There is no globally-accepted definition of the Arab world, but 21 states and territories of the Arab League make up the *standard* definition. This area stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the west to the Arabian Sea in the east, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean in the southeast. The combined population of this area is around 280 million people. The Arab League uses the following definition of an Arab: "An Arab is a person whose language is Arabic, who lives in an Arabic-speaking country, and who is in sympathy with the aspirations of the Arabic-speaking peoples."

Individuals with little or no direct ancestry from the Arabian Peninsula could identify themselves as Arabs, in part by virtue of their home language. However, such an identity is disputed by many peoples. For example, Egyptians may or may not identify themselves as Arabs.

Fewer than half the world's Muslims are Arabs, but the majority of people in the Arab World follow Islam and the religion has official status in most countries. Shariah law exists partially in the legal system in some countries, especially in the Arabian Peninsula, while others are secular. There are also sizable numbers of Christians, living primarily in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, and Sudan. Formerly, there were significant minorities of Jews throughout the Arab World.

Arabic is even more diverse than the different English dialects spoken in Australia, Ireland, England, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. The array of dialects is so distinct that an uneducated farmer from Morocco likely couldn't communicate with an illiterate farmer from Lebanon. The literary language of pre-Islamic poetry, the Quran, and classical Arabic literature has survived today in a version called Modern Standard Arabic, or *fusha*. This formal Arabic is in many ways an artificial language because almost no one really grows up speaking Modern Standard Arabic at home. Many matters of etiquette in the Middle East are connected to Islam as it is written in the Qur'an and how it has been traditionally understood and practiced throughout the centuries. Prescribed Islamic etiquette is referred to as *Adab*, and described as "refinement, good manners, morals, ethics, decorum, decency, humaneness and righteousness".

(From *Ethnicity and Tradition in the Middle East* by Craig S. Davis, 2011)



Linda Yako, an Assyrian Iraqi

Linda Yako, an Assyrian Iraqi, was born in the oil-rich area of Kirkuk. She describes Kirkuk as an historic city that sits on a red hill. Legend has it that its red hill got its color from blood spilled in battle. Linda hails from a large family; along with her mother and father, she has four sisters (three of whom live in Iraq with her parents, and one of whom is in the U.S.) and two brothers (both of whom are here in the U.S.). Her native language is Aramaic, but she is also fluent in Arabic. She describes the Assyrians as peaceful people.

Linda attended university in Mosul and graduated with a degree in biology in 2003. She returned to Kirkuk and started looking for work. She headed for the government building where she met an American soldier. Because she spoke English, he took her to speak to his captain. This introduction opened the door for Linda to start working as an interpreter for the American army. For three years, Linda was assigned to the area of civil affairs where she helped establish the Kirkuk Business Center, teaching people how to write contracts and do the necessary paperwork to set up and run a business. Every Thursday, she ran a meeting for women in business and she found it rewarding to be able to help women open small businesses. Linda also did volunteer work with Reuters, accompanying reporters and taking photographs. She felt she was providing a useful service, and in spite of the danger (no security was provided when she went out in the field with reporters), she especially liked working with the reporters and meeting what she called the "unknown" people.

After some time, working for the American army became very dangerous, especially for women. Linda admitted finding it hard to see people suffer and to face people who hated her for what she was doing. Linda applied to come to the U.S. through a special program set up for people who had helped the army. One of her brothers, who served as an interpreter on the front lines, was also sponsored to come here and now lives in Harrisonburg.

Linda has been in the U.S. for two and a half years. Her first job was working in a kitchen, but she's now happy to report that after working in a law firm for 9 months part-time, she recently was hired full-time. She plans to continue her education, possibly in forensic science.

Bachir Guedal

My name is Bachir, and I'm from Algeria. I'm 28 years old, but many people say I look younger. Because of my French accent, I have been asked many times the question, "Where are you from?" When I say I'm from North Africa, people say, "No, you are not" since I am not black. Many people have the idea that all Africans are black. Also, when I say I speak Arabic as well as French, people wonder why since they think Arabic speakers only come from the Middle East.

Some people say I look Italian. When I get tired of explaining who I am, I just say, "Yes, I am" when they ask me if I'm Italian. I went to a Spanish salon to get my hair cut. The guy who was doing my hair asked, "Do you speak Spanish?" I said, "No, just a little bit." He asked, "Are you Italian?" I just told him yes and followed with the four or five Italian words that I know. He was so happy because it was the first time he had met an Italian. A month later, I went to the same store for a haircut and when the guy saw me, he told his coworkers that I was the Italian guy and they started asking me about Italy. At least my joke brought me new friends who invited me to a Spanish party where I met some beautiful Spanish ladies!



Bachir Guedal, Algeria

Mariam Yakoub, Egypt

Mariam Yakoub, a Coptic Christian from Egypt

The whole world drew its attention to Egypt last year. On January 25, 2011, the people of Egypt decided to demonstrate against the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak, who had been in power for more than 30 years. I visited Egypt in September 2010, prior to the revolution. During my visit, I felt that something radical was going to happen. Egypt was like a volcano about to explode. The high cost of living, the enormous increase in the unemployment rate, and the neglect of public health issues had led to marches against the oppression and tyranny. It was a glorious moment in the new era of Egypt when the youth of Egypt trapped all the people of the old regime, saying "no" to the oppression under which they had lived for years. It was a scene that will never be forgotten in Egypt's recent history; the joy was felt throughout the streets of Egypt where people prayed together for a better future. I wish I had been there to witness the beauty of this moment. Egypt, you will always be in my heart no matter how far away I am from you.



Ali Saleh, an Iraqi Muslim raised in Libya

My name is Ali Saleh, and I am originally from Baghdad, Iraq. I consider myself Libyan because I grew up and lived in Libya for 8 years. I am very proud of being an Arab, especially Iraqi, for many reasons. Iraq (Mesopotamia) was home to some of the oldest civilizations in the world. With a cultural history of over 10,000 years, it is considered the first nation of the world to many. Iraq also has one of the world's largest oil reserves, with more than 350 billion barrels.

I came to Richmond 3 years ago to join my family that I hadn't seen for 7 years, and also to get a college degree. I plan to complete my science degree at JSRCC and then major in Biology at VCU. I love to play soccer and ping pong, and my favorite hobby is reading about politics, especially about the Bahraini revolution. I volunteer as a human rights activist at the Bahrain Center for Human Rights; moreover, I've created my own support page for the Bahraini revolution on Facebook, called *I support the revolution in Bahrain 2011*. The page shares news, videos, pictures, and opinions in Arabic and English. I encourage everyone to visit this link to find out more about what is happening in Bahrain:

<http://www.facebook.com/Free.Bahrain2011>