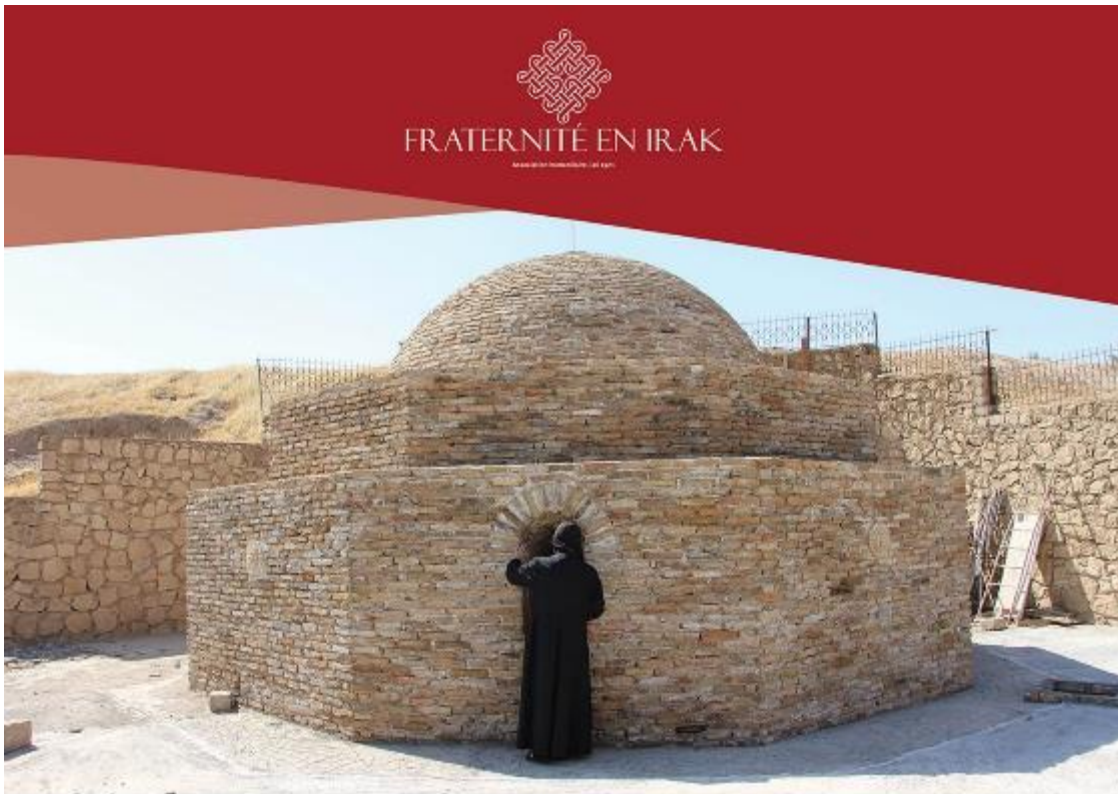


ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2018



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Who we are: an overview of the Organisation

Fraternity in Iraq is an NGO, whose purpose is to help religious minorities to stay in their homeland, by enabling them to play a positive role for the majority of the population. For this purpose, it collects funds and develops humanitarian and educational projects. The inception of founding the organisation dates back to 2009, among a group of students who were deeply affected by learning of the plight of Iraqi refugees in Syria in the news. However, despite their exams, they have shown an unfailing determination and commitment to helping these men and women, chased from their land by the horror of war and precariousness. In late 2010, the attack on Baghdad cathedral, which left 58 dead and 72 injured, reminded them of their project.

The articles of association were registered at the Prefecture de Police in Paris on May 5, 2011. Loyal to those bylaws, members of Fraternity in Iraq went to Iraq, during the summer of 2011, 2012 and 2013, and developed their projects in Kirkuk and Qaraqosh.

Fraternity in Iraq has an extensive local knowledge. It is the only non-Iraqi NGO specialised in Iraq. The several travels of its volunteers allowed it to maintain good relations with local players, and enabled a solid and comprehensive follow-up of the various projects directly financed by the NGO.



Fraternity in Iraq directly finances the projects it leads, without intermediaries.

Fraternity in Iraq nurtures a long-term vision for its projects, beyond the stage of emergency: some projects are even supported for several years, like the school or the childcare centre of Kirkuk.

Fraternity in Iraq has nearly zero operating costs. All its members are volunteers and fund their travel and expenses themselves. Except for the costs due to the printing of flyers and the mailing of tax receipts, the budget is thoroughly allocated to the projects driven in Iraq.

All of Fraternity in Iraq's accounts are audited by an auditor.

This document aims at presenting the activities carried out by Fraternity in Iraq throughout 2018.



What we do: An account of our actions in 2018

Fraternity in action - In Levo, the experience of two volunteers

During the summer, the project teams sent to Iraq are busy as ever! Fraternity in Iraq volunteers Apolline and Jean-Baptiste have shared for one month the everyday life of shepherds and their families in Levo, a remote village in Iraqi Kurdistan. It was a precious and valuable month to them, during which they had the deep, first-hand experience that “even though the material and financial help that Fraternity in Iraq brings is the necessary, visible part of the work we do, it is also essential to show the Iraqi, by our mere presence, that they are not alone”.



Powerful symbols for the reconstruction of the Nineveh Plains

Mosul: displacement and reconstruction of Al-Bishara church

In 2015, the generosity of Fraternity in Iraq's donors made it possible to build a church in Ashti, the refugee camp for displaced Christians in Erbil. This edifice was named Al-Bishara, which means the Annunciation. Built in a few months, the Al-Bishara church had become the heart of the camp where marriages and christenings were celebrated and where groups of all ages would meet. Since the liberation of the Nineveh Plains and the closing down of the camp, many families who lived there have returned to Mosul in order to gradually resume their life as it was before ISIS. Therefore, the church was not of any use in Erbil any longer. As it had been designed so it could be entirely dismantled, it was transferred to Mosul and reassembled on the very site of the church of the same name, Al-Bishara. Indeed, first ISIS had turned the original church into a training centre

for its troops, and later the air raids wrecked it further, so much that it could not be rebuilt. This exceptional operation was the result of Fr Emmanuel's request, the former parish priest of the Al-Bishara church in Mosul before ISIS came, and former parish priest of the Al-Bishara church in the displaced persons camp in Erbil. He now wishes to relocate to Mosul: "Moving the Al-Bishara church from the camp to the site of my former parish in Mosul is a powerful sign of fidelity to what the inhabitants have lived through during these four years of exile".



Renovation of the Shaqqa district

On the outskirts of Qaraqosh, the underprivileged Shaqqa district, which was severely damaged by ISIS, has been completely renovated thanks to the generosity of Fraternity in Iraq's donors and the commitment of its inhabitants. The dedicated funding programme, which began in 2017 as the city was liberated, stipulated that those willing to return to their homes would advance the costs and carry out the work before being reimbursed by the association. A total of 330 apartments were renovated between 2017 and 2018 at a cost of approximately \$1,000 per apartment. The volunteers of Fraternity in Iraq are familiar with the neighbourhood, having established strong bonds of friendship with its inhabitants as of 2011. After having been forced to flee their homes for three long years by the ISIS invasion, the return of those families to their homes in Shaqqa was very moving. Now the recent reconstruction of the nearby playground provides the children of Shaqqa with a colourful and well-adapted space where they can play in peace again. An enduring loyalty to our Iraqi friends and to the projects driven by our NGO allowed for reconstruction and for the return of the families to their homes.



Reconstruction of the Mar Behnam Shrine: behind the stones also lies the future of the people

On 10th December 2018, feast day of the martyr who gave his name to the shrine which has now been rebuilt, the courtyard of the shrine of Mar (Saint) Behnam was crowded. It is hard to imagine that three years earlier, in March 2015, ISIS had ransacked the place and destroyed the dome of the mausoleum with explosives. And yet... As early as the summer of 2017, at the request of the Archbishop of Mosul and Qaraqosh, Fraternity in Iraq initiated the reconstruction of the Mar Behnam Shrine. A true gem of medieval Christian art in Mesopotamia, Mar Behnam is also an iconic place of pilgrimage for Iraqis, whether they be Christians, Muslims or Yezidis. Once the region was liberated at the end of 2016, Fraternity in Iraq commissioned architect Guillaume de Beaurepaire: he visited the site to assess the damage and drew up a reconstruction plan! The reconstruction was launched in June 2017. After the essential mine clearance and rubble clearing operations, a team of experienced architects volunteered to compile the current plans (after destruction) and the original plans (before destruction) of the Mar Behnam Mausoleum in order to record the existing and document the original before any kind of intervention.

By the end of 2017, the site was secured: bricks and ancient materials in hand, workers, archaeologists and architects enthusiastically started to rebuild the walls of the mausoleum. The arches and the domes have been renovated according to the same plans as those established at the beginning of the 20th century. Once the external parts had been rebuilt, the interior of the mausoleum had to be restored. During April 2018, a French team specialised in stone restoration was hired to renovate the carved stones and damaged sculptures.



They removed various graffiti and breakages, also removed a varnish that had been applied to all the pieces found, and which prevented the stone from breathing. They meticulously reassembled the broken stones together and finally put back in place those that had been detached from the main niche where Mar Behnam's relics had been placed. Inside the building, the floors of Mosul marble (called *farish*) were laid; chandeliers were hung. The team then worked on the reconstruction of the reception building, which allowed pilgrims to access the tomb. Consisting of two rooms, it is located at the entrance of the sanctuary site, a few meters from the mausoleum itself. Once the walls were raised, the finishing touches consisted of laying a stone lintel on the outer door, fixing the windows, flattening the floor and building the inner steps.

All the reconstruction work was carried out with old stones and bricks, similar to those used for the construction of the mausoleum in the 12th century. Outside, the cross that towered over the top of the mausoleum was reinstalled. Soon, the relics of Mar Behnam will return to their resting place. A major project has now been completed. While becoming the multi-faith place it once was again, Mar Behnam can, at its level, contribute to restoring religious fraternity and thus help reconciliation.

Economic recovery in the Nineveh Plains is gathering momentum

In the Nineveh Plains, which were liberated in 2016, re-launching the micro-economic pump contributes to greater stability in a severely stricken region. In order to allow the craftsmen and small entrepreneurs to resume their activities and partake in the rebirth of their town, right after the liberation of the area, Fraternity in Iraq came up with a vast economic stimulus programme. The NGO chose to implement it initially in Qaraqosh where most inhabitants are Christians, as a second step in Bartella, and then in Bashiqa where Yezidis figure among the supported entrepreneurs. The programme developed and spread to other towns, so much that in December 2018 the milestone of 250 jobs created was passed!

How the programme works

Fraternity in Iraq helps every selected craftsman or entrepreneur buy back or renovate his means of production (refurbishment of the premises, buying of the machines and raw materials...) that was pillaged or destroyed by ISIS during its 3-year occupation of the area. Roughly 80% of the



necessary amount for funding this comes as an interest-free loan granted to the entrepreneurs who commit to repay it, and the remaining 20% are actually a donation. Incidentally, the economic stimulus programme led by Fraternity in Iraq is championed by the UN and supported subsidised by the French Foreign Office. The NGO assists all minorities: Christians, Yezidis, Kakais, Mandaean...

Who runs it?

Since March 2017, Fraternity in Iraq has been sending project managers on the spot to supervise the programme and select the craftsmen to support. Because they settle in Iraq for one year, blend in and bond with the locals, these young volunteers know the field and know how to make the right choice, always joining forces with the local players of the reconstruction. Though initially focused on the building trade – as reconstruction was the priority – the programme was expanded to trade shops and agriculture to get all sectors of the economy going again. Hence joineries (PVC, wood, metal), blacksmith shops, a building blocks factory, and marble and ceramics factories first reopened. Then bakeries, grocery stores, restaurants and barbershops, print shops, and power generator repair shops. Farmers and chicken farmers were helped. Besides, in 2018, many cattle farmers from the Kakai villages in the East of the Plains had their herds restocked.

Virtuous circle

On the long run, beyond the mere first stage of emergency, the programme triggers a virtuous circle: with the economic recovery a snowball effect sets in, as an incentive for some families to go settle back in their hometown they had left back in 2014 whilst ISIS was getting closer. After two years of exodus and anxiety, by finding a job and a wage, people can support their households again. On a greater level, the religious minorities supported by Fraternity in Iraq have been part of the Iraqi identity for centuries: helping them stay in the country also contributes to its diversity.

2018 figures

At the end of 2018, €720,000 had been invested and 71 businesses re-launched. That stands for 180 additional jobs created, and as many families who can live thanks to that recovery of trades and businesses. Just 18 months after the programme was launched, 38 beneficiaries have started to repay their loans and about ten of them have already fully paid theirs off. This adds up to \$120,000 ready to be reinvested in support of new projects.



Profiles of entrepreneurs

43 out of the 71 entrepreneurs who benefited from the programme did so in 2018. Among them:

- Azhar breeds calves; Seerwan owns a grain processing factory; Faraj manages a power generator; Mothafar is a PVC & metal joiner while Salwan's factory produces home care products.
- Aras and Awas make halawas, sweets made with sesame and nut butter: the jihadists had plundered everything they could from their business located in Bashiqa and the NGO's financing scheme allowed them to buy back the equipment necessary to the production of their candy! In September 2018 the two brothers got the required governmental approval regarding hygiene and security on their premises.
- Amir, Ahmed, Muhsin and Faris are Kakai sheep farmers. They were the first four Kakai tradesmen to benefit from Fraternity in Iraq's economic stimulus programme. Each of them provides for an average of two families. A farmer buys young sheep that he fattens during three months with a mix of wheat, barley and proteins before reselling them on the Erbil market.
- In July 2018 Badri bought back his first flock of 3,000 chicks and re-launched his chicken farm in Qaraqosh.
- Waseem makes and refurbishes sofas. ISIS had wrecked his Bartella workshop but now, thanks to the economic stimulus programme, he hired two additional employees to renovate the couches and armchairs of the Bartella households.

Access to education

Funding of two schools for Yezidi children in Kurdistan

In 2018, Fraternity in Iraq maintained its commitment to support refugee education by financing the functioning of the two schools for Yezidi pupils it had opened. Founded in 2014, the school of Bozan now boasts 130 pupils – and the demand for new enrolment is still growing. These young refugees can study various subjects such as Kurdish, Arabic and English, mathematics, biology, art, and music.

In just a few years, the school's results are already impressive: "the school is recognized as the best of all Yezidi refugee schools!" the English teacher proudly says. In view of this success, another school, in the village of Shirka, was created two years later. And yet, its size is already catching up with the first one in Bozan: there, five teachers teach to 120 pupils aged from 4 to 5. For both schools, Fraternity in Iraq provides for the teachers' wages, the school rent and the children's snacks.



Construction of a multi-faith school in Basra

The 30th of September 2018 was back to school day for the children of the Chaldean school in Basra (Southern Iraq, and the country's second largest city), in a school that had been renovated and extended by Fraternity in Iraq, which initiated this project back in 2016. Twelve teachers from all religious backgrounds teach to 70 children, while waiting for the next ones as soon as the authorisations to open additional classes come in! The kindergarten already welcomed 120 children; since 2018, four additional classrooms and a new building that includes a library, a computer room, an arts and crafts workshop, and the director's office have sprung up. Ultimately, more than 180 children are expected to attend the new school, which christened as the School of the Annunciation – *Al-Bishara*.

Access to health care

Helping the Qaraqosh Hospital

In 2017, Fraternity in Iraq enabled three departments of the Qaraqosh Hospital to resume their activities: the maternity ward, the emergency room and the dental office. All those services are still functioning well: 250 to 300 patients are treated there daily, 20% of whom are Qaraqoshis, and 10 to 15 babies are born there every day. Since 2018, the hospital has been open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. At the end of 2018, Fraternity in Iraq contributed to the purchase of surgical sterilization kits to increase the efficiency of the operating rooms: in fact 6 ORs are available but

until then only 10 operations could be carried out per day, for want of equipment. Thanks to the kits financed by the association, the staff should be able to perform 5 additional daily operations.

Helping the Sinjar Hospital

In the Yezidi town of Sinjar that was wrecked by the fighting against ISIS, the hospital lacks everything. Since the beginning of 2018, Fraternity in Iraq has been helping the only doctor to provide basic care services... Among the recurring pathologies are the injuries caused by the mines left by ISIS and the traumas of living in a city in ruins: children falling from buildings, inhabitants injured by falling rocks... Not to mention all the everyday illnesses, bites and stings from the snakes scorpions that live in the area. For that reason, Fraternity in Iraq has started its help by providing the necessary equipment for that emergency room: an electrocardiograph, a tracheal aspirator for children, a defibrillator, sterilization equipment, oxygen tanks, etc. For the NGO, it is a priority to help the Yezidi community that has returned to Sinjar: isolated and in a country that has to deal with the post-ISIS emergencies, Yezidis are trying to start living again, far from the large urban centres of Iraq.

Commitment for culture

Auction sale of artworks from the exhibition *Exodus and Hope*

The journey of the travelling exhibition *Exodus and Hope* initiated in 2016 continued throughout 2018. After Erbil, Croissy-sur-Seine, Evreux and Saint Nazaire, the artworks were presented at the city hall of the 7th arrondissement of Paris in January. It was a unique chance to set up a great



cultural event for its opening: readings of excerpts from the play *The Night of Qaraqosh* by Alexis Chevalier, graphic improvisations by Marie-Camille Chambounaud as well as musical excerpts by Nahla Jajo and Franck Seguy. As part of this exhibition, president Faraj-Benoit Camurat shared his insights on the stakes of the post-ISIS reconstruction in an enlightening conference. In April, the exhibition was then shown throughout the festival "You, my brother" in Pornic where many visitors, locals and tourists passing through the region saw it. In partnership with l'Œuvre d'Orient, the paintings were also exhibited at the Château de l'Hermine in Vannes at the end of August. Finally, the last stop was at the city hall of the 6th district of Lyon, where the presentation of the paintings took place during an evening of conferences and testimonies by volunteers of the association.

This travelling exhibition ended with an auction organised by the Saint Irénée Foundation in Lyon. Now, the journey of the Iraqi canvases in France has come to an end, leaving in our hearts a taste of hope and a more intense fraternity with our brothers in Iraq.

European and international representation

In mid-September 2018, the Second International Meeting on the Humanitarian Crisis in Iraq and Syria took place in the Vatican. It was dedicated to the response to the concrete problems that displaced Christians and refugees from these countries are facing. Fraternity in Iraq, along with several other organisations, was invited to reflect on the long-term assistance provided, as current reconstruction efforts are being undertaken in a context of tremendous security and political

challenges. A privileged encounter: the members of the Fraternity in Iraq got the chance to meet Pope Francis during a private audience; they entrusted him with a Bible burned by ISIS found at the Mar Behnam Shrine and a honey pot produced by some of our Yezidi friends on Mount Sinjar – symbols of memory as well as hope for the presence of religious minorities in Iraq.

Also, in May, a delegation of the association had taken part in the 3rd International Conference for Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East, in Brussels. Determined to make governments aware of the fate of the more than 3,000 Yezidi women and children still held hostage by ISIS, we met Nadia Murad, who escaped from ISIS slavery and is now an ambassador of the United Nations. She received the Nobel Peace Prize on October 5, 2018, which amplified the impact of her courageous struggle in which Fraternity in Iraq actively supports her.

