



# ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2019

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Volunteers regularly visit residents of remote villages in northern Iraq.



## 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 2019.



## What we do: An account of our actions in 2019

### Kurdistan: Supporting Christians from remote villages in Northern Iraq

#### Three targeted goals to help left out Christians of Iraqi Kurdistan

In northern Iraq, at the border with Turkey, a mountainous region lies where Christians have been living for centuries. They did not directly suffer the ISIS invasion in 2014 but rather generously welcomed their Christian and Yazidi neighbors from the Nineveh plains who had been kicked out from home by the jihadists. From now on, these Christians are now caught up in another conflict: Fights between the Turkish army and the PKK - an armed group advocating the independence of Kurdistan- have escalated in 2019. The area is frequently shelled and Christians, caught in the crossfire, fear to have to leave their villages. For several years, Fraternity in Iraq has been helping these remote inhabitants. In addition of regular visits to mountainous villages, provided support comprises supply of heating and other equipment, fitting of cisterns and refurbishment of buildings. In March 2019, the village of Sharanish was bombed again and Christians and Muslims who were living there had to flee. 24 families have steadily benefited from first need goods provided by the association throughout the year 2019.



*Volunteer visiting families in northern Iraq.*

Fraternity in Iraq is acting so that Christians in these isolated villages can stay at home and live decently. To this purpose, we aim to achieve three goals:

- **Upgrading infrastructure.** For instance, in Berseve, a nursery is under construction. In Levo, it's a classroom of the primary school accidentally burned which has been refurbished.
- **Opening up villages:** Fraternity in Iraq has funded two bus to provide school transportation. The first one connects several villages with Zakho, the nearest big city and the second one connects two villages a few kilometers far from each other.

- Reviving agriculture and local economy:** thanks to the expertise developed in the Nineveh plain, we aim to support farms, small companies and businesses in this mountainous region



*Opening up is an important issue for these isolated villages.*

### **Funding of two schools for Yazidi children in Kurdistan**

At fall 2019, it was the fifth start of school year for the Yazidi kindergarten started up by Fraternity in Iraq in the village of Bozan in northern Iraq, and the third for its sister kindergarten of the neighboring village of Sherka. They each welcome a hundred Yezidi refugees aged between 0 and 6.

## **Plain of Nineveh: reconstruction is gradually cementing**

### **Rehabilitation of Mar Behnam sanctuary**

The intertwined cross carved on the door of Mar Behnam shrine had inspired the association's logo before the sanctuary was destroyed by Daesh in 2015. From now on, the cross has been fixed again to the door after an 18 month-period rehabilitation. Works started in June 2017. After the essential demining and clearing operations, a team of experienced architects drew up the current plans for the mausoleum of Mar Behnam so as to take note of the existing one and keep track of the original one before undertaking any action. For the members of the association, it is very moving to see this monument, part of the Iraqi religious heritage, rebuilt. Let's hope this will be an opportunity for Iraqis of different denominations that worship this place to re-connect all together. Many thanks to all our generous donors as well as to the ALIPH Foundation for having enabled us to carry out this challenging project.



*The reconstructed Mar Behnam mausoleum.*

### **Economic revival: more than 100 companies have resumed business!**

In order to enable artisans and small entrepreneurs to resume their business, Fraternity in Iraq conceived a wide-ranging plan of economic revival right away after the liberation of the Nineveh plain. The association decided to initiate it first in Qaraqosh and then to gradually expand it to surrounding villages. In 2019, in keeping with the action started up in 2018, many sheep and calf breeders, dwelling in the kakaï villages located in the east side of the plain, got the opportunity to restock their herd thanks to a zero-rate loan granted to selected entrepreneurs and who agreed to pay off it up to 80%. The remaining 20% was a donation. In that respect, Fraternity in Iraq has helped them to buy back their production tools destroyed or looted by ISIS between 2014 and 2016. Since March 2017, Fraternity in Iraq has been assigning project managers on site to monitor the project and select the entrepreneurs who will be supported. In 2019, thanks to the work done by Cécile, Stanislas, Caroline and Camille, 30 new entrepreneurs and 29 employees found a position, a growth that has raised the total number of businesses revived to 101 and the number of jobs created since the inception of the project to 316.

### **Fundraising evening with l'Oeuvre d'Orient**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 2019, Fraternity in Iraq, jointly with l'Oeuvre d'Orient, arranged a fundraising event for Iraqi and Syrian entrepreneurs! More than € 200,000 in donations were raised for both associations. For the first time, two friendly associations joined forces to support the war-torn minorities in Iraq and Syria.

**L'Œuvre  
d'Orient**  
 depuis 1856

au service des chrétiens d'Orient



## Mosul: two churches to promote the comeback of Christians

### End of the relocation project for Al-Bichara Church

Late 2019, the structure of Al-Bichara Church in Mosul was reassembled, consolidated and fitted out thanks to the donors of Fraternity in Iraq! Besides, the Diocese of Mosul carried out the decoration phase. This is the ending of a great adventure for this church built in 2015 in the “Ashti” displaced people camp in Erbil: designed to be fully removable, it could be moved to Mosul to be reassembled at the place of origin of Al-Bichara Church. The latter had been wiped out beforehand because it was too damaged due to the fighting against Daesh. The inauguration of the new church on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 and the first mass celebrated there the next day symbolized the hope for a Christians’ comeback to Mosul.



*Inauguration of the reassembled church, December 7, 2019.*

### Rehabilitation of Mar Toma Church

Located downtown in the old city, the Mar Toma Syriac Catholic Church is the only one to have been refurbished in this West Mosul district devastated by the fighting against Daesh... Fraternity in Iraq made this heritage safeguarding possible by rehabilitating the dome affected by a shell and fully rebuilding the three destroyed stone altars. Consequently, in 2019, Christians in Mosul could celebrate Saint Thomas on July the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the Feast of the Cross on September the 14<sup>th</sup> in a restored church.

## Kirkuk: Steady improvement in access to healthcare

### Support to the cancer unit

For the past two years, thanks to the donors of Fraternity in Iraq, a sterile hood has been protecting the staff carrying out chemotherapy processes at Kirkuk hospital. Initially dedicated to pediatrics, the use of this equipment has gradually spread to the treatment of all types of cancer, thereby testifying to the importance of the need it meets. Late 2019, Fraternity in Iraq funded the purchase of a mammography unit that is essential for detecting and treating breast cancers, which are also very numerous in Iraq.

### Funding of construction for a center dedicated to autistic children

In Kirkuk, Fraternity in Iraq is supporting the opening of a new therapy center for autistic youth. Construction is about to start: the team is dedicated, the therapy program set up meanwhile is a great success and the plot has been found! This center aimed to support autistic children is complementary to the assistance provided by Fraternity in Iraq to the nearby hospital, and is a sign of a sustainable and thorough support to the inhabitants of the area.



*Meeting with the medical team.*

## Bagdad: a first project led by the organization is taking shape

### A solidarity-based pharmacy for the poorest Christians in the Iraqi Capital

Over the course of summer 2019 and after several sighting missions, Fraternity in Iraq has begun taking action in the Iraqi capital! To support the remaining Christian families of Baghdad, the association has decided to bankroll a solidarity-based pharmacy for the most deprived. Established within the presbytery of the Holy Family parish in Baghdad, it allows the most

impoverished to stock up on drugs, milk powder, diapers, etc. Abouna Ghassan, parish priest and project initiator, considers that his mission, even if spiritual first, is also to support and help his parishioners daily. He is committed lavishly and seeks “to help the greatest number of families to live with dignity”. The association has then funded the fitting out of premises as well as a 1-year supply of drugs.



*The solidarity-based Pharmacy.*

## **Basra: increasing support for the Christians of the city**

### **Refurbishment works for Mar Toma Church**

In Basra, Iraq's third city with by now only 150 Christian families, most of the city's churches are closed down. This is not quite true regarding Saint Thomas church, erected in 1885, where masses used to be celebrated until 2004. Monsignor Habib Jajou al-Nawfali, the local Chaldean bishop, asked Fraternity in Iraq to finance the development of a garden adjoining the church in order to foster the Christian heritage but also to make this beautiful spot enjoyable again where Christians could gather, meet, pray, etc. In October 2019, the plot was therefore landscaped with olive trees, a wrought iron fence, a play area for children and even a small vegetable garden! Meanwhile, the city's multi-faith school, enlarged by Fraternity in Iraq in 2018, welcomed 74 children for their start of school!