

| Governance | Diplomacy | Business | Economy | Tourism | Quality of Life | Culture | Heritage |

# BRANDKURDISTAN

Region of Iraq

Exclusive Interview

**President  
Nechirvan Barzani**

**Forging a  
New Future**



An architectural rendering of a modern residential complex. The scene is dominated by several tall, multi-story apartment buildings with light-colored facades and dark window frames. The foreground and middle ground are filled with lush, tropical landscaping, including numerous tall palm trees, smaller green trees, and manicured lawns. A gravel path winds through the garden, where a man is walking a dog, a young boy is walking, and a young girl in the foreground is holding a colorful pinwheel. To the left, there is a small, rectangular swimming pool with a blue interior, surrounded by greenery and a few ducks. The sky is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day. The overall atmosphere is one of a modern, green, and family-friendly living environment.

# The Boulevard

A New Face of Real Estate in Kurdistan



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**TOTO**



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# BRANDKURDISTAN

Region of Iraq

Centered on five key dimensions – governance, business, tourism, quality of life, and culture – Brand highlights the Kurdistan Region of Iraq’s vision and its growing ambition.

## Special thanks

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# Forging a New Future

## Foreword

**The Kurdistan Region of Iraq looks forward to welcoming talent, ideas, and inspiration from across the world.**

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). From its earliest days, the KRI has had a vision of building a society in which people live in peace, harmony, and security. The region has successfully consolidated its position as a beacon of stability within the Middle East over the last three decades.

The KRI has developed a model for peaceful coexistence over the years. Kurdistan, home to considerable religious and ethnic diversity, has provided a safe haven for minorities fleeing violence in the rest of the region. Despite all the problems unfolding around it, the Kurdish model could become an example in terms of peaceful coexistence. Something that outsiders closely associate with Kurdistan is its people’s strong tradition of hospitality and openness. Much of this is a reflection of Kurdistan’s heritage.

The KRI’s business landscape has undergone an outstanding transition since its establishment. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has fully committed to implementing structural reforms with an eye to diversifying the economy and providing a commercial environment that is conducive to new business growth. The KRG is continually launching reforms to improve government services and encourage digitalization across all sectors.

The Kurdish leadership believes that education is vital to building a bright future. Therefore, education lies at the heart of the KRG’s vision, equipping Kurdish youth with the knowledge and skills that will provide the KRI with future generations of political and business leaders.

The KRG is committed to supporting environmental protection and is working tirelessly to reduce air pollution and excessive use of plastics in the KRI. Various environmental campaigns have been initiated in recent years to raise awareness among the public about the importance of environmental protection.

The status of women has also significantly improved in the KRI in the last three decades. Women’s growing role in Kurdistan’s decision making in politics, business, education, media, and art is a distinctive element of Kurdish society today.

The people and their stories within the pages of Brand: Kurdistan Region of Iraq testify to Kurdistan’s commitment to socio-economic development. We strongly believe that the KRI’s future will be built on the achievements that it has made so far. Yet this marks just the beginning of Kurdistan’s journey.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq looks forward to welcoming talent, ideas, and inspiration from across the world.

The Survey

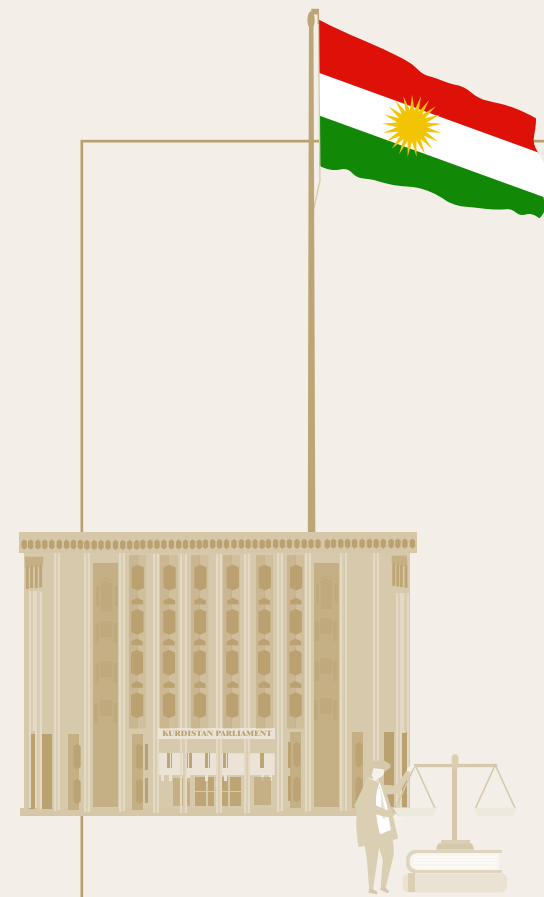
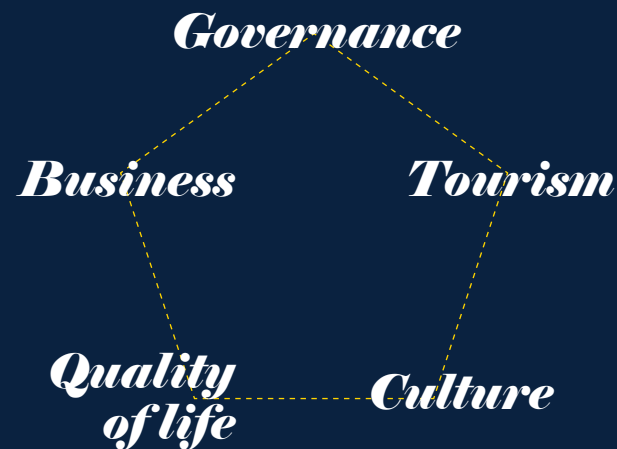
# BRAND KURDISTAN

## Making strides towards a promising tomorrow.

In a rapidly changing world, countries, regions and cities are competing for attention in their quest to promote trade, attract tourists, investors, and talents, and encourage cultural and scientific exchange. The reputation of a place depends on the confidence of the rest of the world. This confidence is directly related to outsiders' decisions to visit, invest in and recommend a country. In this survey, we set out to demonstrate the key drivers of the Kurdistan brand and its competitive advantages.

Performance by Dimension

### We have focused on five dimensions to identify Kurdistan's brand drivers:



## Chapter 01: Governance

### Parliamentary democracy

Kurdistan has had various defining moments which have propelled the brand forward in a hugely positive manner. One of the most notable was that of adopting parliamentary democracy as its governance model. Elections have been conducted freely and fairly in the KRI since the first Parliamentary elections were held in 1992. The latest and highly successful elections in 2018 reflected the maturing of Kurdistan's democracy and a broadly inclusive and participatory electoral process.

### International recognition

Kurdistan's rise in the international arena is undeniably another defining driver in its journey. Thanks to a dynamic foreign policy based on developing good relations with its neighbors, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has rapidly improved its ties with foreign capitals throughout the world since 2006. The KRG has 14 Representations around the world and there are currently 40 foreign diplomatic missions in the KRI as of 2021.

### Coexistence

Coexistence is a key value of the KRI. Since its early days, the KRG has introduced laws to promote and protect the rights and freedoms of religious minorities and to maintain peaceful co-

existence in Kurdistan. All religious groups live together peacefully and enjoy relatively robust religious freedoms in Kurdistan.

### Trusted partner for peace & stability


In its fight against ISIS and other terror groups, Kurdistan has been able to demonstrate to its regional and global partners that it is a trusted partner for peace and a factor for stability in Iraq and the wider region. Kurdistan has enjoyed stability, economic development, and peaceful coexistence among various religions and ethnicities, earning the respect of its regional and international partners.

### Leadership

The President, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister are the key "brand champions" who lead and personify the regional and global positioning of the KRI. The leadership has the most influence over the content of those who speak and write about the KRI. President Nechirvan Barzani's, PM Masrour Barzani's and Deputy PM Qubad Talabani's regional and international reputation and strong connections have boosted Kurdistan's brand standing within the global community.

Since the image and reputation of a place evolve gradually over time, it would be fair to say that Kurdistan's story as a brand is just at the beginning. Although the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) was established in 1991, the KRI's story started after the unification of two separate Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) cabinets in 2006.

Kurdistan's brand perception has changed in a number of important areas since 2006. The Kurdish leadership has worked hard to improve Kurdistan's reputation, and to position Kurdistan as an investment destination of choice and trade partner since 2006. Thanks to the outstanding efforts of the Kurdish leadership, Kurdistan's whole image and reputation, covering political, economic and cultural dimensions, on the international stage have been boosted in the last 15 years.

 to see the content please go to page 26



## Chapter 02: *Business*

Despite recent economic challenges, Kurdistan's business landscape experienced an outstanding transition and remarkable achievements in the last 15 years. The hydrocarbon industry has played a pivotal role in the development and welfare of the KRI since 2006. Due to its abundant oil and gas resources and rapid economic development, Kurdistan was defined as the world's last oil and gas frontier, and a possible "Dubai of the future" by the global business and investment community.

### Reform Agenda

The KRG is stepping up structural reforms aimed at diversifying the economy and developing the private sector in order to provide the right commercial environment conducive to new business growth. The KRG also aggressively pushes for digitalization, which will cut bureaucracy and provide greater transparency in all sectors.

**Kurdistan is experiencing significant transformation at the highest levels in terms of economic diversification, digitalization, transparency, and fighting corruption.**



### Digitization

New digital services and reduced bureaucracy are the main drivers of the KRG's reform agenda to improve ease of doing business. The KRG is creating a digital "one-stop shop" to ensure business owners can quickly get the support and advice they need to thrive. This certainly means a more business-friendly environment in which new trade, investment, and related economic interactions will be fostered.

**Kurdistan is making a difference among its peers with its ambitious digital transformation.**

### Transparency


Kurdistan aims to set the pace on boosting transparency in the Region as fighting corruption is a top priority of the KRG's reform agenda. The leadership foresees that transparency in government revenues, taxation systems, and tendering processes

is crucial in getting government revenues back on track, for winning the battle with corruption, and opening a new phase in relations between the government and the people of Kurdistan.

**Kurdistan's investment law is one of the friendliest to foreign investors in the Middle East.**

### Infrastructure

The KRG is well aware that its economic development will be determined by the ways infrastructure investment is implemented. Transportation networks, silos, electricity lines and water pipelines have been deemed a priority for infrastructure investment, and the KRG is directing significant levels of funding towards these projects.

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## Chapter 03: *Tourism*

Unfortunately, Kurdistan's tourism potential has not been realized properly yet. Kurdistan needs proactive tourism brand management which can be built on much stronger perceptions of the Region's natural beauty and ancient history. Considering its range of attractions, historic places, archeological sites, and untouched natural beauty, Kurdistan has huge potential to brand itself as a tourism destination.

**Kurdistan offers tremendous attractions to people who want to connect with culture, heritage, and history.**

The KRI's tourism potential and offering have not been covered fairly and extensively in international media. Therefore, there are places on the world map where Kurdistan is completely unknown to most people, or where the image of Kurdistan is incorrect and outdated. Knowledge about Kurdistan is



particularly poor among young people in countries far away. However, this is gradually changing.


Kurdistan, with a diversity of landscapes, culture and heritage, looks to raise its profile as an adventure and archeological tourism destination.

The KRI sits on the ancient land of Mesopotamia, which is known as the cradle of civilization, the birthplace of agriculture, writing and law, host to the world's oldest civilizations, cultures, and religions. Kurdistan, which has over 1,000 known archeological sites, has an untapped wealth of potential in archeological tourism.

Another defining element of Kurdistan's tourism is its stunning untouched nature.

The Region is surrounded by beautiful, winding mountain ranges, with everything from hiking, skiing, and birdwatching on offer. Therefore, Kurdistan has the potential to become a regional draw for adventure-related activities and a popular place for outdoor tourism.

**The KRI is also working on expanding its meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) tourism sector.**

 to see the content please go to page 146

## Chapter 04: Quality of Life

Quality of life is one of the most powerful drivers in influencing people's perception and in decision-making about business and leisure. We zoom in on five subcategories — health, education, human capital, safety and environment — under the quality of life.

### Higher Education

Both the public and private higher education sectors have seen rapid growth over the last two decades. Nineteen new universities have been founded in the KRI in the last 15 years. The KRI has a total of 26 universities today. This confirms the KRG's commitment to reinforcing its human capital.

### Safety

The KRG is determined to ensure that its citizens and all of its guests are able to live, work, and enjoy the blessings of peace in a safe environment. Despite the security warnings in Iraq or the surrounding

region, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is one of the safest places in the Middle East. There is minimal risk from crime, and tourists can move around in safety.


### Environment

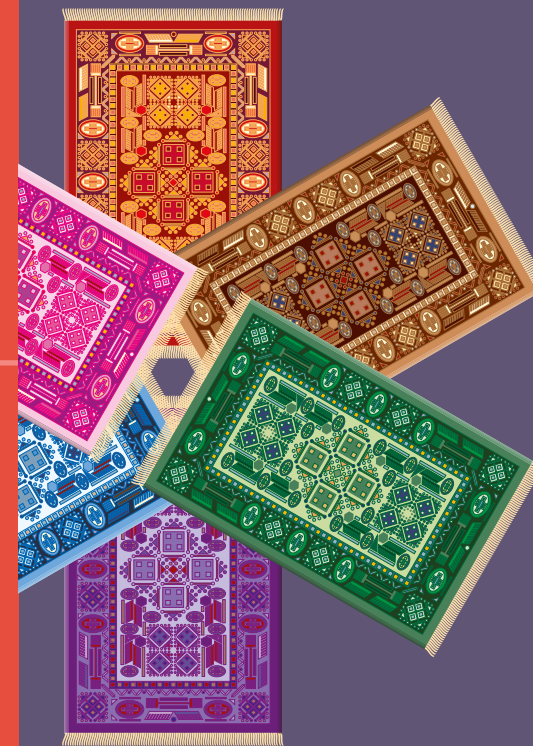
A reputation for environmental friendliness is a main driver of a place brand. Various environmental campaigns have been initiated in recent years to create more awareness about the importance of environmental protection among the public.

**The KRG is committed to supporting environmental protection and is working tirelessly to reduce air pollution and excessive use of plastics in Kurdistan.**

### Health

Despite acknowledged deficiencies in its healthcare system, the KRG has set out reforms to improve the quality and efficiency of Kurdistan's health system in order to achieve health indicators in line with the Gulf States and Europe.

 to see the content please go to page **234**



## Chapter 05: Culture & Heritage

Social cohesion, coexistence, and hospitality are the cornerstones of the Kurdish culture, which makes Kurdistan one of the welcoming places in the Middle East for outsiders.

Eight different religious groups - Muslims, Christians, Yezidi, Jews, Sabean Mandaean, Kaka'is, Zoroastrians and Bahais - live together peacefully and enjoy relatively robust religious freedoms in the KRI. When asked, over 80 percent of people agree with the following statement 'all different religious and ethnic groups exist in Kurdistan need each other to prosper.' This is significant as it indicates social and cultural harmony in the KRI. Kurdistanis agree that they need to work together in harmony and with a shared vision.

**Kurdistan: A home to considerable religious and ethnic diversity**

Our survey proves that the KRI has all the necessary cultural ingredients to brand itself as a hub for peaceful coexistence. Despite all the problems happening around them, the Kurdish model could become an example in terms of cultural cohesion. This is something that outsiders perceive as almost unique to Kurdistan: their strong tradition of hospitality and openness.

**In a region with major challenges, Kurdistan's tolerant society functions as a hub for peaceful coexistence.**


### Women's rights

Women's growing role in Kurdistan's decision making in a number of sectors, including politics, business, education, media, and art is another distinctive cultural element of the Kurdistan brand.

**Kurdistan has earned the respect of the international community by opening its doors for over one million refugees and IDPs.**

A great increase has been observed in the number of activities related to sports, music and art in Kurdistan in recent years. In reality, branding Kurdistan belongs to all Kurdistanis, but especially the Kurdish youth — the true promoters of the Kurdistan brand. In recent years, young entrepreneurs have begun making an impact in fashion, design, media, and art. Youth plays a crucial role in putting Kurdistan's image in the right direction.



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# Portrait of Leadership

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**President Masoud Barzani served as President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) from 2005 to 2017. He is regarded as a key leader in the modern history of Kurdistan and recognized for his decades-long struggle to secure, defend, and preserve the rights of the people of Kurdistan.**

Reflecting on the history of the KRI over the last several decades, President Barzani's critical role in leading the uprising of 1991 and calling for immediate elections can be readily identified. His efforts helped secure the rights of the Kurdish people and religious components in the Iraqi Constitution of 2005. His defense of the KRI in the fight against ISIS and, more recently, his spearheading of KRI's independence referendum in 2017 have been outstanding achievements.



***Masoud Barzani***



**Masoud Barzani joined the Peshmerga forces on May 20, 1962, following in the footsteps of other prominent members of his family, including Sheikh Abdulsalam Barzani I, Sheikh Muhammad Barzani, Sheikh Abdulsalam Barzani II, Sheikh Ahmad Barzani and Mustafa Barzani, all of whom were prominent and inspirational, even dominant, figures in the Kurdistan liberation movements throughout the region.**

## 1991 Uprising and call for elections

After decades of struggle against successive Iraqi regimes, on May 3, 1988, the Iraqi Kurdistan Front, an alliance of eight of the main Kurdish political parties, was established to coordinate and unify Kurdish efforts against Saddam's Regime. Both President Masoud Barzani and the late Idris Barzani had invested greatly throughout 1980s in the formation of the Front.

Three years later, in 1991, President Barzani, in conjunction with other Kurdish leaders at the time, played a crucial role in the Kurdish uprising, which led to the ousting of Saddam's forces from the KRI. On April 7, 1991, President Barzani led the Peshmerga in the defense of Kore against the attacking forces of the Iraqi regime, attempting to suppress the uprising and regain the territory under Kurdish control. The Battle of Kore ended in Iraq's failure to further advance into the KRI and it is considered by historians to have been one of the most significant and consequential battles between the Kurds and the Iraqi government.

Throughout his career, President Barzani has remained a staunch supporter of creating and sustaining a democratic system where all citizens are treated equally, and their rights preserved. Addressing a large crowd of supporters on the eve of Newroz in 1991, in the town of Koya, President Barzani called for immediate elections in the KRI, paving the way for the process of democracy to gain momentum. For the first time in the KRI's history free elections were held in 1992, leading to the formation of the Kurdistan Parliament and the Kurdistan Regional Government, which provided a strong foundation for the evolution of democratic process.



**Throughout his career, President Barzani has remained a staunch supporter of creating and sustaining a democratic system where all citizens are treated equally, and their rights preserved.**

# Securing the rights of the people of Kurdistan in the Iraqi Constitution

President Barzani and the former President of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, led the KRI and played a significant role in the removal of Saddam's regime. Against the historical backdrop of the Kurdish struggle within the State of Iraq, President Barzani, along with other key Kurdish leaders, fought hard not only to secure the rights of the Kurds but also those of all ethnic and religious groups in Iraq.

In his deliberations at the Iraqi Governing Council, President Barzani emphasized the concept, and political system, of federalism, democracy and social justice. When the Law of 2004 dealing with the Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period was written, much of the key Kurdish demands were inserted, including Article 58, which later became Article 140 in the permanent

Iraqi Constitution. President Barzani insisted that Kurdistan maintained its special status but also worked to ensure that all Iraqis could enjoy their rights as equal citizens under the law.

At one point in particular, President Barzani insisted on the need to secure, through the constitution, the rights of Iraq's religious and ethnic components. He argued that the cultural, political, and religious rights of all had to be guaranteed. To that end, he invited representatives of Iraq's religious and ethnic components to attend the Iraqi Governing Council's sessions to enable them to present their demands. In this, and other ways, he helped them secure their rights and protect their individual identities in the Constitution.



**President Barzani insisted on the need to secure, through the constitution, the rights of Iraq's religious and ethnic components. He argued that the cultural, political, and religious rights of all had to be guaranteed.**



**The fight against ISIS**

**As the Commander-in-Chief of the Peshmerga Armed Forces, President Barzani was often at the front lines personally commanding his forces in the battles against ISIS.**



Throughout 2014, the ISIS terror group advanced deep into Iraqi territory. In June, ISIS took control of the city of Mosul, the country's second most populous city, as well as the oil refinery at Baiji, the largest in the north of the country. Almost overnight, ISIS became the most well-equipped, well-funded terrorist organization in the world. In a matter of weeks, ISIS changed the political geography in Iraq, controlling a third of Iraqi territory and committing genocide against the Yezidis and Christians in the Nineveh Plains. For a period, Kurdistan no longer shared a 1,050-kilometer border with the rest of Iraq, but with ISIS terrorists.

For the next three years, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Peshmerga Armed Forces, President Barzani was often at the front lines personally commanding his forces in the battles against ISIS. During this period, the Peshmerga forces became a symbol of resistance against the cruelty of the terrorists. President Barzani was visited by a number of world leaders who collectively commended the crucial role of the Peshmerga forces in the existential clash with the terror group.

## 2017 Independence Referendum



Although the idea of creating an independent Kurdistan has been a central component of the Kurdish movement for more than a century, the people of Kurdistan have not always opposed participating in the Iraqi State. After the fall of the dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003, Kurdistanis enthusiastically voted to ratify the new 2005 Iraqi Constitution. However, over the next decade, the Constitution was not fully implemented. Major articles of the constitution, which KRI leadership had negotiated hard to include, were never implemented. Most notably Article 140, which outlined a mechanism to resolve territorial disputes between the KRG and the federal government, setting a deadline of 2007 for the Article to be implemented. Despite Kurdish protests, this deadline came and went with hardly any movement from the federal government. In all, the federal

government violated, or failed to implement, 55 of the 144 articles of the Iraqi Constitution.

Following the American withdrawal in 2011, relations between the Shia-led government in Baghdad and groups throughout the country deteriorated. In February 2014, then Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki unilaterally cut off the KRI's share of the federal budget. Between 2014 and 2017, the rift between Erbil and Baghdad deepened further. The Kurdish leadership became increasingly concerned about the direction the country was being taken, which was very different to that envisioned for the post-Saddam era. Consequently, they called on the international community, in vain, to mediate between the two sides and to insist on the implementation of the Iraqi Constitution in full.

**Although the aftermath of the referendum brought about a new period of difficulty for Kurdistan, the results have left an indelible mark on the politics of Iraq. For the first time since the formation of the country, the people of Kurdistan had voiced their opinion. It was, and it will remain, etched in the history of the Middle East.**

It was in this context that President Barzani hosted the majority of the Kurdish political leaders on June 7, 2017, to discuss the future of Kurdistan. Much to the surprise of many, not only did the leaders agree to hold a referendum, they agreed on a date, September 25 of that year, only three months later. Kurdish leaders made it clear that the referendum was not an instant, unilateral declaration of independence. Rather, it was a peaceful and democratic form of expression that would be used in the upcoming negotiations with the federal government.

Although the announcement came as a surprise to Kurdistan's partners in the United States and Europe, international leaders initially raised only minimal concerns. As the date approached, people in Kurdistan and around the world came out to demonstrate in favor of the referendum. Tens of thousands of people gathered in Duhok, Erbil, Slemani, Zakho, and other cities in the Kurdistan Region, filling stadiums beyond their capacity and pouring out into the streets. President Barzani, himself, campaigned and participated in a number of gatherings across the KRI in support of the referendum between June and September 2017.

As public support grew for the referendum, other countries became increasingly vocal in their opposition. Officials from the US, Turkey, Iran, Germany, and others held meetings to try to discourage the KRG from holding its referendum. However, none offered credible alternatives or any solid commitment to help resolve the outstanding issues between Erbil and Baghdad.

In the absence of solutions or guarantees for the future of the KRI, and emboldened by the outpouring of public support, President Barzani decided to proceed with the referendum. On September 25, 2017, for the first time in history, the people of the KRI were able to voice their opinion on whether they wanted to remain part of a federal Iraq or aspired to be independent. 93% of Kurdistanis voted to leave the Iraqi Federation, in a referendum that was as much about a longstanding historical aspiration as it was about the politics of the day.

Although the aftermath of the referendum brought about a new period of difficulty for Kurdistan, the results have left an indelible mark on the politics of Iraq. For the first time since the formation of the country, the people of Kurdistan had voiced their opinion. It was, and it will remain, etched in the history of the Middle East.

## 01

Chapter one:

**Governance  
& Diplomacy**

**Thanks to the outstanding efforts of the Kurdish leadership, Kurdistan's whole image and reputation, covering political, economic and cultural dimensions, on the international stage have been boosted in the last 15 years.**

The Snapshot

**Governance**

**Kurdistan is a federal region of Iraq. Established in 1991, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is run by a parliamentary democracy.**



**Article 117 of the Iraqi constitution recognizes Kurdistan as a federal region of Iraq.**

Established:  
**1991**

Capital:  
**Erbil**

First Elections:  
**1992**

Electoral Term:  
**4 years**

Status:  
**Federal Region**

Political Structure:  
**Parliamentary Democracy**

Legislative Power:  
**111-seat Kurdistan Parliament**

Iraq's constitution recognizes the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Kurdistan Parliament as Kurdistan's governmental institutions and identifies the Peshmerga as the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's security force.

The KRG is the autonomous governing body of the KRI and holds constitutionally recognized authority over the governorates of Erbil, Duhok, Slemani, and Halabja.

The KRI, which borders Syria to the west, Turkey to the north, and Iran to the east, comprises a total area of 40,643 km<sup>2</sup>.

The Iraqi constitution gives the KRG authority to exercise legislative and executive authority in certain areas, including allocating the regional budget, security, education and health policies, natural resources management, and infrastructure development.

The KRI has an independent judicial system. The system is headed by a Supreme Court of Cassation, which decides cases of the highest importance, as well as cases that have been appealed through lower courts. The judicial system also has a number of lower courts that decide on commercial and criminal disputes.

# The President

**Nechirvan Barzani, the current president of the KRI, came into office in June 2019.**

The President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is elected directly by the people of Kurdistan. The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Peshmerga. The President, as established by the Kurdistan Parliament in 2005, is elected every four years and is legally restricted to serving two terms. The President appoints the Prime Minister from the largest bloc in Parliament to form a government. The cabinet is then approved by the Kurdistan Parliament.

**The President, as established by the Kurdistan Parliament in 2005, is elected every four years and is legally restricted to serving two terms.**

The President's responsibilities include serving as the Commander-in-Chief of the Peshmerga forces, ratifying all laws approved by the Kurdistan Parliament and approving political appointments made by the KRI's Prime Minister. The President of the KRI has the authority to veto legislation only once, and, even then, legislation is merely sent back for continued debate and possible amendment.







## *Nechirvan Barzani*

*President of the  
Kurdistan Region of Iraq*

# Pursuing the Future through a Global Approach

**In an exclusive interview, President Nechirvan Barzani sheds light on his vision for improving global ties, protecting the environment, encouraging youth entrepreneurship, improving the role of women, and coexistence in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.**

**How would you characterize the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KRI) global vision by improving diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties?**

For many decades, we were isolated and neglected, to our detriment, by the global community. In 1991, we returned from exile to our homeland at a time when UN-authorized trade sanctions disconnected contact with the rest of the world. International trade was severely restricted to food and medicine, telecommunications were disconnected, and traveling beyond our borders was almost impossible. We were subjected to threats and attacks from our neighbors. This isolation prevented us from seeking the recognition and help we deserved.

Since 2003, however, we have actively sought to develop relations with countries, corporations, and organizations around the world, and they have significantly expanded and improved in depth and detail. In many sectors, the amount of capital and international investment in our Region has dramatically increased.

To best serve the interests of our people, we strive to maintain and strengthen our regional position within a democratic Iraq. To a positive degree, this has been successfully achieved through relations with 40 diplomatic missions in addition to international organizations such as NGOs, UN agencies, and the World Bank.

Our vision is simple: We shall continue to pursue international partnerships that build cultural, diplomatic, and economic relationships of mutual interest. Respectful and progressive international relations are essential in order to demonstrate we are a reliable partner for peace and stability and that our Region is safe and secure to attract investment.



**Respectful and progressive international relations are essential in order to demonstrate we are a reliable partner for peace and stability and that our Region is safe and secure to attract investment.**



“ We are raising awareness of environmental concerns and pursue solutions. We look forward to participating in global environmental efforts that share knowledge, understanding, and effective solutions. ”



#### How important is protecting the environment for Kurdistan?

The land we walk on, the water in our streams, and the air we breathe are vital not only to our lives but also to our identity. As the source of our life and prosperity over many centuries, almost every family in our Region has sacrificed for our land. Our mountains have been our refuge. Our rich cultural heritage that distinguishes our identity is rooted in our land, to which we are deeply devoted.

We struggled to survive genocidal campaigns against our people with the destruction of hundreds of communities, chemical weapons attacks in dozens of places, systematic deforestation and forced relocation that disconnected our people from their lands and livelihoods. Since our regional government was formed in mid-1992, hundreds of destroyed communities have been reconstructed and resettled with good roads, water, electricity and telecommunication services.

To enhance the quality of life in both urban and rural areas, despite severe financial constraints and occasional political setbacks, we have begun to focus more attention, effort, and resources on well-landscaped parks for all to enjoy. We are raising awareness of environmental concerns and pursue solutions. At the personal and social levels, we have begun to focus on trash management and trees to rid the environment of unsightly waste, conserve soil and water, enhance the attractiveness of our scenic wonders, and contribute to mitigating the adverse effects of climate change.

For us, environmentalism is not a foreign concept. In certain areas, century-old local social initiatives actively promote ecosystem preservation through environmental efforts. For example, in the Barzan area, there are socially enforced rules against cutting fruit and shade

trees along pathways, hunting during reproductive seasons or killing animals while they drink water, endangering bees by harvesting wild honey excessively, killing non-venomous snakes, or fishing with dynamite.

We look forward to participating in global environmental efforts that share knowledge, understanding, and effective solutions. Our youth and others have begun to show respect for their environment through clean-up and anti-littering campaigns. Organizations and individuals, including myself, have been directly involved in tree-planting. We look forward to these and other environmental efforts becoming general movements that influence our everyday lives in satisfying ways.



### How important is it to encourage the youth of Kurdistan to engage in entrepreneurship and innovation?

I've been encouraged by observing our young entrepreneurs who are developing businesses that contribute to the diversification of our economy. The importance of empowering entrepreneurs in our economy cannot be overstated. Their contributions through small and medium enterprises are of paramount importance to create a sustainable thriving economy.

Entrepreneurs and small businesses are essential for diversification to advance and sustain our economy. Countries that offer attention and support to their entrepreneurs and small businesses have more opportunities to build and maintain a strong economy. It is thus important that we offer effective support to startups and small businesses through streamlining procedures to reduce and eliminate barriers and provide access to finance, possibly with tax-deduction incentives.



“ We continue to support anti-domestic violence efforts and other gender-based campaigns aimed at protecting women’s rights, promoting equality, empowering women in all sectors, and amending laws that favor the rights of women. ”

*equality*

### How would you characterize the role of women in Kurdistan Region society?

Women have long played important roles in Kurdistan. We've had women rulers like Adela Khanum of Halabja and Mir Khanzad (Khanzad Sultan) of the Soran Emirate, Yezidi regent of Sheikhan Emirate Meyan Khatun, Assyrian Christian Peshmerga Margaret George Shello, and activist Layla Qasem, who was executed by the Iraqi Baath regime.

Today, the position of women in government is a source of our strength. One-third of our lawmakers are women as well as the Speaker and Secretary of our Parliament, and women serve important roles in every ministry. Women also hold important positions in our security services

including the police force and as soldiers in the fight against ISIS.

Protecting women's rights, however, remains challenging and we continue to determine strategies and policies that effectively promote gender equality and advance the status of women. For example, we continue to support anti-domestic violence efforts and other gender-based campaigns aimed at protecting women's rights, promoting equality, empowering women in all sectors, and amending laws that favor the rights of women. Toward achieving gender equality, laws have been amended and new laws have been enacted that provide further protection for women's rights.

**The High Council for Women's Affairs was established to advocate women's rights publicly and also internally within the government.**



### How would you describe Kurdistan in terms of peaceful coexistence?

Our centuries-old diversity is another of our strengths. Our rich cultural heritage is about our ancestors of many ethnicities and religions. Not so long ago, our homeland was a source of families who were forcibly displaced from their homes. Today, we are a refuge for the displaced.

I believe Kurdistan is a powerful model for peaceful coexistence in the Middle East and the world. We are a very ethno-religiously diverse society. While the majority of our people are Sunni Muslim, we are also Shia

Muslim, Yezidi, Christian (Assyrian, Chaldean, Syriac, Armenian), Mandeian, Kaka'i, Zoroastrian, Baha'i, and Jew.

Since 2003, in reaching a peak of nearly two million displaced people, our Region has been a refuge for every ethnic and religious community in Iraq, plus refugees from Syria, Turkey, Iran, and even Palestine. Most fled to our Region because of ISIS' genocidal atrocities committed against their communities in the Islamic State – an Iraqi and Syrian territory larger

than Britain. Despite the demise of the Islamic State, and primarily because of inadequate security, most are unable to return to their original homes. Though it is a major expense for our government, we shall continue to welcome, protect, and host all those who seek refuge in our homeland. Peaceful coexistence is within our vision and we aim to enshrine protections of minorities in our laws and policies.



**Peaceful coexistence is within our vision and we aim to enshrine protections of minorities in our laws and policies. We are a very ethno-religiously diverse society. While the majority of our people are Sunni Muslim, we are also Shia Muslim, Yezidi, Christian (Assyrian, Chaldean, Syriac, Armenian), Mandeian, Kaka'i, Zoroastrian, Baha'i, and Jew.**





**Masrour Barzani**  
The Prime Minister



**Qubad Talabani**  
Deputy Prime Minister



Who is who

# *Kurdistan Regional Government*

The 9th cabinet of the KRG was sworn into office on June 10, 2019 at the Kurdistan Parliament.



**Farsat Ahmad  
Abdullah**  
Minister of Justice



**Shoresh Ismail  
Abdulla**  
Minister of Peshmerga  
Affairs



**Rebar Ahmed  
Khalid**  
Minister of Interior



**Awat Janab  
Noori**  
Minister of Finance and  
Economy



**Mohammad Said Ali**  
Minister of Youth and  
Culture



**Abdullah Mahmood  
Mohammad**  
Minister of Martyrs and  
Anfal Affairs



**Begard Dishad  
Shukralla**  
Minister of Agriculture  
and Water Resources



**Muslim Saeed**  
Minister of Trade and  
Industry



**Saman Hussein  
Muhammad**  
Minister of Health



**Alan Hama  
Saeed Salih**  
Minister of Education



**Dana Abdulkareem  
Hamasalih**  
Minister of Housing and  
Reconstruction



**Sasan Othman Awni  
Habib**  
Minister of Municipalities  
and Tourism



**Ano Jawhar  
Abdulmaseeh Abdoka**  
Minister of Transport and  
Communication



**Pshtiwan Sadq  
Abdullah**  
Minister of Endowment  
and Religious Affairs



**Mohammad Salih  
Khalil**  
Minister of Electricity



**Dr. Kamal Atroshi**  
Minister of Natural  
Resources



**Aram Mohammad  
Qadir**  
Minister of Higher  
Education and Scientific  
Research



**Dara Rashid  
Mahmud**  
Minister of Planning



**Kwestan Mohamad  
Abdulla Maarouf**  
Minister of Labour and  
Social Affairs



**Vala Fareed Ibrahim**  
Minister of State



**Khalid Salam Saeed**  
Minister of State



**Aydin Maruf Selim**  
Minister of State

The Snapshot

# Good Governance

**The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is committed to economic diversification, transparency and the welfare of future generations.**

The 9th cabinet of the KRG has announced various reform packages that focus on fighting corruption, promoting transparency of government revenues, boosting democracy, creating new economic sectors that generate jobs, the digitalization government services, and encouraging innovation across all sectors.

Here are the main pillars of good governance in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



**1. The rule of law**

Strong and independent judiciary is one of the most important part of any functioning democracy. A strong judiciary ensures that laws are followed by all, regardless of their power or wealth. Therefore, the KRG intends to create an atmosphere that the law does not discriminate between citizens and residents or between rich and poor in order to prevent miscarriages of justice and create a strong and independent judiciary.



**2. Building a strong democracy**

Every good nation needs to provide a forum where all its people can be heard. The Kurdistan Parliament, which has given the minorities a voice, reflects its people's wishes and makes decisions that work for everyone. The proportion of ethnic minorities in the population as a whole and people from a range of different backgrounds are represented in the Kurdistan Parliament.



**3. Business friendly**

Kurdistan's business environment is regarded as one of the most open in the Middle East. One of the main objectives of the KRG is to nurture a business-friendly environment for small and medium-sized enterprises and potential entrepreneurs. KRG is working towards creating an active, fair and open private sector.



## 4. Economic diversification

KRG has continuously stressed the importance of diversifying its economy away from dependence on oil. As such, economic diversification has been placed at the top of the agenda of the 9th cabinet of KRG. The government intends to develop a diversified, sustainable economy that is integrated into regional markets. Creating new sources of income and developing new industries that are part of a knowledge-based economy are particular focal points, especially in tourism, manufacturing, logistics, agriculture, healthcare, education, and IT.



## 5. Celebrating coexistence

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq is home to considerable religious and ethnic diversity. Kurdistan has provided a safe haven for minorities fleeing violence in the rest of the region. Thus, tolerance and openness are key factors for the government. KRG promotes peaceful coexistence between followers of different religions, and presents Kurdistan as a place where all religious groups live together peacefully and enjoy robust religious freedoms.



## 6. Start-up nation

The KRG believes that Kurdistan's future depends on its capacity to nurture a highly qualified young generation and to attract talented people and generate innovative ideas. Therefore, KRG gives special importance to building tech-driven entrepreneurial ecosystems in Kurdistan that will attract forward-thinking industry leaders of the future.



## 7. Efficiency and transparency

KRG has placed digital transformation at the core of its development strategy with the aim of making government more efficient and transparent. KRG's digital transformation aims at creating a business landscape that is adapted to the digital world. KRG's vision for digitalization will transform all aspects of society and business in Kurdistan.



## 8. Future generations

KRG takes into account the needs of the current and future generations. KRG's long-term aim is not to pass problems, be the environmental, economic or social, on to future generations. Thus, KRG's ministers have been designated the task of taking the KRI into the future on a firm footing by strengthening relations with its citizenry, ensuring the well-being of its people, sustaining progress, and providing for the welfare of the future generations.



**Principled.  
Determined.  
Pragmatic.**

## *Qubad Talabani*

*Deputy Prime Minister of the  
Kurdistan Regional Government*

### **Deputy PM Qubad Talabani on improving the quality of life, protecting the environment, encouraging innovation, women's empowerment, and ensuring the rights of minorities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.**

#### **What are the 9<sup>th</sup> cabinet's next steps towards delivering improvements in quality of life in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) in the medium term?**

It is time now for the government, political parties and investors to redirect their efforts into sustaining development - not only of the oil and gas sector- but most importantly, of health, education, agriculture and tourism. These would become pillars of our economy if well-informed policies are put in place.

Our land is fertile. It is time that we grow and strengthen our land to promote the development of our agricultural and industrial sectors. Along with tourism they can provide a viable back-up to our oil sector.

Developing the agriculture sector by introducing new policies and innovative technologies is aimed at transforming it into one of the cornerstones of our economy. This sector, if developed, would contribute to job creation all across our Region.

In the manufacturing sector, we have all the essential primary and secondary resources. We will seek to develop them so the sector can support the already established oil sector and in turn support Kurdistan's economy.

There are plenty of touristic places in the Region that would be of help to Kurdistan's economy. The tourism sector has the potential to support the KRI's economy. Even now, we are able to attract hundreds of thousands of citizens from other parts of Iraq who come and enjoy Kurdistan's beauty.

Our government is paying close attention to technology and transforming its public sector. This started with the introduction of the biometric registration program and the services program that aims at mapping transactions between government and the public. This is another step to improving the quality of life, as bureaucracy is the major impediment to national advancement, across all sectors.

#### **How important is protecting the environment for the 9<sup>th</sup> cabinet?**

Protecting the environment is a top priority. Kurdistan is a beautiful place. From Duhok to Halabja and Garman, there are plenty of nice places that would be of help to Kurdistan's economy if preserved. Protecting the environment by ratifying laws and putting in place regulations which would protect greenish lands and transform them into nature preserves is something that the government takes into consideration.

**Protecting the environment by ratifying laws and putting in place regulations which would protect greenish lands and transform them into nature preserves is something that the government takes into consideration.**

“ I can assure everyone, be it in my personal capacity, be it in my official capacity, I will continue to support all efforts made by the new generation of Kurdistan. ”



#### Where do you see examples of Kurdish young people best engaging in high-tech innovation?

There are plenty of examples. The Startup Expo-Frost Edition, iTalk and Hackasuli events this year proved once again that Kurdistan is the place for entrepreneurial initiatives which bring new perspectives to doing business and leveraging our role in the region when it comes to innovation, technology integration and entrepreneurship.

We are focusing on digitizing our government. We are right now in

the middle of reengineering how one could set up a company in Kurdistan. When citizens, investors or businessmen need something to be completed in a governmental institution, they should feel that their government is there to serve and support them, and not to hinder the process. I can assure everyone, be it in my personal capacity, be it in my official capacity, I will continue to support all efforts made by the new generation of Kurdistan.

**We are focusing on digitizing our government.**

#### What time does your day start?

It officially starts at around 7:00 am. Nothing gets me ready for a long day at the office better than a morning workout.

#### Do you work out daily?

I try to, whether it is some weight training, cardio, or Muay Thai, I try to focus on getting my workouts in. Workouts are not only good for the body, but also for the mind.

#### What does your daily routine look like?

Following my daily morning workout and a light healthy breakfast, I skim through local, regional and international news sites for half an hour before getting ready to leave my house.

#### Who is your favorite writer? What book are you reading currently?

I am currently reading Don Winslow's The Border.

#### What type of movies do you watch?

I tend to watch a variety of different genres of movies.

#### Do you follow developments on social media daily?

Yes. I am quite active on Twitter, even if I don't tweet often, but I follow trends, engage with tweets whenever I have time. I also check my Instagram sporadically.

#### Please define Kurdistan in three words.

I would rather stick to my line: My Kurdistan is a Kurdistan for All.

#### Please define your leadership style in three words.

Principled, determined, pragmatic.



#### How would you define the role of women in Kurdistan?

Women of Kurdistan play a leading role nowadays on multiple levels, whether political, economic, entrepreneurial or through track-two activities aiming at ending discrimination, empowering younger generations and promoting participation. Men and women of Kurdistan, especially those in decision-making positions, must examine all mechanisms to support women and encourage them in different fields.

Women's empowerment and participation is a contributing factor to growth and prosperity. It reminds us that women's participation in governance, politics and legislation would empower our society and would create balance, reminding us that politics is not only restricted to men. The government is ready to work with civil society organizations, women's organizations, and religious leaders on issues related to gender equality, combating violence against women and working towards a more balanced and modern culture of respect and tolerance.

#### What policies does the KRG have in place to ensure that religious minorities' rights are upheld in the KRI?

Modern statehood invites us to think of tolerance and accommodation at home, while emphasizing cooperation based on mutual respect and international law abroad. However, none of this is possible if our domestic front is divided. Unity here is a prerequisite, and by unity I do not mean thinking alike on all socio-political matters. By unity I am referring to unity over a sense of purpose, a collective vision. It is only once we are united on what state we are aspiring to and striving for, that the promise of statehood can be fulfilled. This how the 9<sup>th</sup> government will be approaching policies which aim at upholding the rights of all minorities, by stressing the collective vision following a simple rule of thumb: Reconcile, Envision, Achieve.



The Snapshot

# *Kurdistan Parliament*



The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is governed by a unicameral legislature. The Kurdistan Parliament was established in 1992 and has demonstrated its enduring commitment to the democratic tradition. A democratic and transparent legislative process, as carried out by the Kurdistan Parliament, provides a foundation for regional political stability and national cohesion.

The Kurdistan Parliament shares legislative authority with the Iraqi Council of Representatives in the areas of education, health, historic preservation, policing and internal security, transport, natural resource management, environmental policy, and tourism. The laws of the KRI take precedent over federal legislation in issues involving customs, the distribution of electricity, internal water resources, and general planning.

**The first  
Parliamentary  
elections were  
held in May**

# 1992.

As per Article 115 of the Iraqi constitution, all powers not explicitly reserved to the Iraqi federal government belong to Iraq's regional authorities, including the Kurdistan Parliament. When regional laws contradict federal legislation outside areas specifically reserved for federal authorities in the Iraqi Constitution, the Kurdistan Parliament has the authority to amend the application of federal laws within the KRI.



**The minimum  
age of  
parliamentary  
candidates is**

# 25.



### Parliamentary Elections September 30, 2018





## Maturing Democracy

*Dr. Rewas Faiq Hussein*

Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament

**Dr. Rewas Faiq Hussein, Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament, on the role of women and the state of democracy in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.**



**How would you define the Parliament's role and the state of democracy in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq?**

Kurdistan is a young democracy. Building a strong parliamentary democracy and promoting democratic culture takes time. Our main aim is to strengthen our democracy, create prosperity, and realize our potential by granting democratic rights in their fullest to the people of Kurdistan. In order to do that we are focusing on passing relevant legislation to reinforce our democracy. We want to adapt our laws on political parties, on civil organizations, on freedom of the press, and on organizing demonstrations to the standards of the world's leading democracies. We are committed but we need time to reach that level.

We believe that the Parliament must serve and represent the interests of the people and meet their ever-growing expectations. So, we want to show to the people of Kurdistan that we are tirelessly working for them. Therefore, we are focusing on the laws which will directly improve the quality of life of the people of Kurdistan. Our focus is to pass all the necessary bills to strengthen the legal framework of the most important sectors, such as insurance, agriculture, health, and housing.

**Our main aim is to strengthen our democracy, create prosperity, and realize our potential by granting democratic rights in their fullest to the people of Kurdistan.**

**How would you define the role of women in Kurdistan? Do you believe that Kurdistan will one day have a woman President or Prime Minister?**

If you compare the status of women with how it was in the 1990s, we see a big improvement. For instance, today, women are actively involved in politics and receive a lot of trust and respect from the public. However, there are some sectors in which women are underrepresented, such as in business. We need to raise the level of education of women in Kurdistan, so that they can play a much more important role in various segments of life.

We have two projects in Parliament aimed at expanding the role of women in Kurdistan. One of them is in the political sphere. We want to change the quota system in political party's executive bodies. Political parties should provide more senior roles to women by granting them leadership positions and executive power. Another project is related to social issues and seeks to improve the incomes of women inside the family. That's a project that still needs approval from the government and is on hold for now.

Regarding the second part of your question, I think some people never believed that a woman could one day become Speaker of the Parliament. But it happened. So, a woman President and a woman Prime Minister is not a dream. It could happen in the future. I believe Kurdistan's political landscape will not stay as it is in future. I believe that I will be an example for others and to show that women can perform top-level tasks and hold senior positions if I am successful as a woman politician. So, I feel very responsible in my duty.

## Reform is key

*Hemin Hawrami*

Deputy Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament

**Hemin Hawrami, Deputy Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament, on good governance in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.**



**How would you define the Kurdistan Parliament's role in promoting democracy and good governance?**

Firstly, with the change in the electoral system from closed party lists to semi-open lists, the public now votes for individual party candidates rather than for a particular party. This increases voter turnout and our citizens' engagement with candidates. Candidates who want to become members of parliament (MPs) can announce their pledges and priorities to voters and campaign to win their support.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq stands out as a model for peaceful coexistence in the Middle East. The participation and representation of Kurdistan's various ethnic and religious communities in elections is ensured by reserving them 11 parliamentary seats. Currently eight different Christian, Armenian and Turkmen parties have seats in Parliament. We are committed to ensuring that democracy and representation is not only for ethnic Kurds, but also for all component populations of Kurdistan.

While we do not have a constituency system, MPs spend a lot of time meeting citizens from their areas to familiarize themselves with local issues. Parliament has branch offices in five locations, at which the public can submit requests and complaints. This ensures that Parliament does not just work behind closed doors and fulfills its democratic duty to represent all geographical areas.

Parliament promotes good governance by scrutinizing the performance of the sitting government. In recent months MPs have looked into many issues, including problems with household water meters, quality control of pharmaceuticals, administrative hurdles for investors,

and corruption allegations, as well as allocating part of the budget to building sports centers. Parliament can summon ministers and other officials for questioning. If deemed necessary, they can refer cases to the Integrity Commission.

**What are the key legislative bills that the Kurdistan Parliament will focus on?**

The Kurdistan Parliament will focus on bills that support the government's reform agenda. The bills include streamlining government employees' pay grades, salary scales and pensions, establishing a special quality control body for medicines, foodstuffs and other consumer products, creating a health insurance system, education reforms, and amending the investment law to facilitate economic diversification.

Another big priority is to draft the Kurdistan Constitution. While we have laws that govern our institutions and enshrine out people's rights and responsibilities, we do not have a defining constitution. The Constitution will describe, empower, and limit governing institutions, and will protect the rights of all Kurdistan's religious and ethnic communities.

**We are committed to ensuring that democracy and representation is not only for ethnic Kurds, but also for all component populations of Kurdistan.**

The Snapshot

# Foreign Relations

The KRG's energetic and broad foreign relations are crucial and integral components of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's economic and social development.

The KRG's primary body for directing its foreign affairs is the Department of Foreign Relations (DFR). The DFR's foremost objectives are to raise the global profile of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), improve the KRI's international ties with various governments and international organizations, and present the emerging opportunities in the KRI to regional and international actors.

**The KRG's presence abroad has grown significantly since 2007. The KRG currently has representative offices in 14 countries.**

The KRI is determined to work closely with its immediate neighbors in order to contribute stability, security, and prosperity to the region. In accordance with its policy of open-door diplomacy, the KRG has been able to forge strong ties with its neighbors in recent years.

The KRG has been able to shape the Kurdistan Region into a gateway to Iraq, not only with its economic development, but also with its active foreign policy vision. The KRG maintains a dynamic foreign policy based on developing good relations with its neighbors and resolving issues through dialogue. This policy allows Kurdistan to strengthen its ability to develop prosperous relationships with foreign capitals throughout the world.

**The KRI has made remarkable diplomatic progress since 2003, achieving the establishment of 40 foreign representation offices including consulates general of the five permanent members of the UNSC in the KRI.**



## Diplomatic Missions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

### Consulate Generals:

Armenia, China, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Palestine, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkey, United, Kingdom, United States, United Arab Emirates

### Consulates:

Korea

### Consular Office:

Romania, Poland

### Commercial Offices:

Austria, Bulgaria

### Honorary Consuls:

Spain, Denmark, Sri Lanka, Belarus, Slovakia, Brazil

### International Bodies:

European Union, United Nations, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Korea International Cooperation Agency

### Embassy Offices:

Sweden, Canada, Japan

Q&amp;A

# Building Influence

*Safeen Dizayee*

Head of the Department of Foreign Relations

## Minister Safeen Dizayee on the KRG's foreign policy, refugees and IDPs' rights, and opportunities to the global business community.



**We must remain engaged with the international community to ensure the long-term stability of our region, improve living standards and delivery of public services, and protect every member of our diverse society.**

### What are the pillars of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KRI) foreign policy that support the Region on an international level?

Over the last two decades, the KRG has fostered relationships with governments and organizations around the world, as a key component of our aim of providing stability and prosperity for our people.

When ISIS attacked, many of these relationships became even more vital, as we partnered closely with dozens of militaries and humanitarian organizations to defeat the terrorists and care for the victims of violence and genocide.

Now that we have crushed the ISIS, we must move these international relationships beyond wartime cooperation, and diversify our partnerships across different sectors. This includes attracting investments, cultural and academic exchanges, and bringing new ideas and initiatives to Kurdistan Region. We will continue to prove that the KRG is a reliable partner, not only on the battlefield, but in all sectors.

We must remain engaged with the international community to ensure the long-term stability of our region, improve living standards and delivery of public services, and protect every member of our diverse society.

### What policies does the KRG have in place to ensure that refugees and IDPs' rights are upheld in the KRI?

After the rise of ISIS in 2014, the KRI experienced a refugee crisis of almost unimaginable scale. For several years, one in four people in Kurdistan was a displaced person, nearly two million at the peak. This coincided with a catastrophic crash in Kurdistan's revenue, both from rapid decline in oil prices and the withholding of the KRG's share of a federal budget by the federal government. The net result was an existential financial crisis that tested the limits of the KRG's institutions and society.

Despite this extremely challenging environment, the people of Kurdistan have welcomed displaced Iraqis and Syrians. Unlike many parts of the world, the KRG tries not to restrict

the movement of the displaced population or their ability to work. In fact, many local people are excited to see Syrian Kurds opening restaurants and raising the quality standard in the hospitality industries.

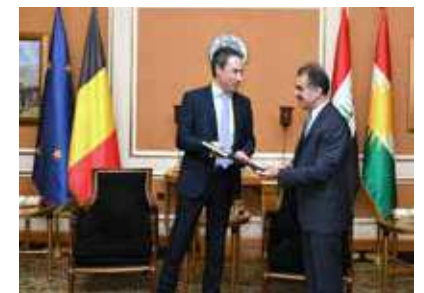
We have welcomed displaced people because we ourselves are people who suffered repeated displacement. Although hosting these vulnerable communities costs the KRG \$1.4 billion per year, we remain committed to doing so, simply because we empathize with the plight of refugees.

### What message would you like to send to the global business community regarding the opportunities in the KRI?

Kurdistan is open for business. The KRG is keen to facilitate with any companies looking to invest in our region. A decade ago, Parliament passed the Investment Law: lucrative guarantees for international companies, including exemptions from taxes, access to land, and 100% foreign ownership and repatriation of capital are among the incentives we are excited to continue to offer.

The KRG is a business-friendly administration committed to economic diversification, particularly in the agriculture, tourism, and light manufacturing sectors. International companies will find a local investment community that is interested in partnering in new ventures and a young, educated, and eager local workforce.

As the only consistently stable region of Iraq, the Kurdistan Region is an ideal entry point into the vast Iraqi market, and a launching point for operations further afield. The KRI has a thriving community of expatriates. Foreign workers will find Erbil, Slemani, and Duhok to be safe, modern cities where one can find a relatively high standard of living.



The Focus

## Kurdistan Region of Iraq *through the lens of the world leaders*

**Donald Trump**  
US President



We have a tremendous relationship with the KRI. We appreciate the KRI for its role in defeating ISIS and protecting ethnic and religious communities.

**Emmanuel Macron**  
French President



We appreciate the KRI for providing asylum for refugees and IDPs, and for protecting religious and ethnic groups. I reiterate our support for the KRI within the framework of the EU and the UN.

**Angela Merkel**  
German Chancellor



We praise the culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the KRI. We will do whatever we can to help the KRG cope with the IDPs and refugees.

**Giuseppe Conte**  
Italian PM



We value the old tradition of tolerance and coexistence among the various religious communities in the KRI and reiterate our humanitarian support to the KRI. We would like to strengthen the bilateral relations in various fields.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has demonstrated to the international community that it is a beacon of peace, stability, and coexistence within the Middle East. Various world leaders have reiterated their support for the KRI.

**King Abdullah**  
of Jordan



We are keen to enhance our trade ties across various sectors.

**Mark Rutte**  
Dutch PM



We acknowledge the KRG's reform mission and support Dutch companies' enthusiasm for investing in multiple sectors of the KRI's economy.

**Mikhail Bogdanov**  
Russia's Deputy FM



We praise the stability and security in the KRI and its role in promoting stability in the Middle East. We would like to further develop our relations with the KRI.

**Philippe Goffin**  
Belgium Foreign & Defense Minister



We praise the role of the KRI in its efforts to support stability and security in the area, while promoting coexistence and tolerance among the region's different religions and ethnicities and providing a safe haven for IDPs and refugees.

## A Diplomatic Breakthrough

# The success story of Kurdish diplomacy

following the independence referendum of 2017



**The overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003 ushered in a decade of rapid socio-economic growth in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). With an agreed share of federal public revenue, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) invested heavily in long-neglected essential services and infrastructure. Further, the KRG urged and facilitated**

**the private sector's growth and prosperity alongside the public sector. With its open access, investment boom, and status as the world's last oil and gas frontier, the KRI became a significant attraction for the global business and investment community.**

**Then-PM Nechirvan Barzani and his cabinet shouldered a heavy responsibility to find a way out of the political, economic and social crises and respond to the urgent needs of the region, to steer the course of Erbil-Baghdad relations away from confrontation – an indispensable but complicated task.**

The failure of the Iraqi federal government to address pressing issues as required by the Iraqi Constitution, however, caused a persistent and severe rift. Shockingly, the KRI's heightened level of public and private development was suddenly curtailed in 2014, when the federal government under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki suspended the KRI's share of the federal budget. This financial suspension was exacerbated by another shock the same year, the savage and threatening ISIS onslaught. This caused the third shock, of nearly two million displaced persons, mostly from other parts of Iraq, seeking refuge in the KRI. A fourth shock, a dramatic drop in global oil prices, deprived the KRI of additional revenue. During this time, the federal government provided neither humanitarian support to the KRG for hosting their displaced Iraqi citizens nor military assistance for the fight against ISIS, which continues to this day. Nevertheless, at enormous expense, the KRI remained secure for all residents and visitors and provided for the displaced people.

As the ISIS threat subsided, tension between the KRI and Iraqi government increased. Concerns intensified over the country's direction and the Iraqi government's blatant tendency to ignore the Constitution.

The international community was called upon to mediate, but they did not adequately consider KRI's grievances. In response to the highly threatening situation, the KRI decided in June of 2017 to hold an independence referendum, and the date of September 25th 2017 was set.

The referendum would only determine the preference of the citizens of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region for or against independence, to be later followed by a negotiated settlement. The referendum was also conducted in areas of questionable jurisdiction, a situation the federal government failed to resolve by the end of December 2007, as required by the Constitution. If the referendum results favored independence, the KRG would have faced four possible outcomes: independence, reaffirmation of federalism and its implementation per the Constitution, perhaps a form of confederation, or persistent stonewalling and obstructionism by the federal government.

# 93%

**The referendum on September 25th, 2017 resulted in 93% of those who voted favoring independence.**



As domestic public support increased, foreign governments discouraged the referendum. None offered credible alternatives or demonstrated a sincere interest in assisting in resolving the intransigence, nor promoting adherence to upholding the Constitution.

The referendum on September 25th, 2017 resulted in 93% of those who voted favoring independence. In the KRI, the independence referendum process, before and after, was peaceful and joyous and attracted the attention and presence of dignitaries, journalists, academics, and other foreign visitors.

Though in and of itself the referendum changed nothing, then-Iraq Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi reacted violently to the results. The Iraq Constitution explicitly forbids the use of military forces for political purposes.

# 1,700

**The war against ISIS took the lives of over 1,700 Peshmerga, with many thousands more wounded.**

## **Mr. Nechirvan Barzani enjoys close personal relations and influential contacts with European and American leaders, and also with governments and other prominent individuals in Ankara, Tehran, and Baghdad.**

About three weeks after the referendum, however, in blatant violation of the Constitution, Prime Minister al-Abadi ordered armed forces to take over areas that KRG Peshmerga Forces had been protecting from ISIS. Al-Abadi's military forces, including Shia militias, caused over 20,000 families to flee their homes and were involved in documented atrocities and looting.

Prime Minister al-Abadi extended aggression by imposing punitive measures on the people of the KRI. He closed national airspace to international flights into Erbil and Slemani airports and demanded control of border crossings. Ignoring federalism required by the Constitution, Prime Minister al-Abadi attempted to invade the KRI and overthrow the KRG militarily. All attempts failed, thwarted by KRG Peshmerga Forces.

Oil production and global prices were severely reduced, and international travel was severely restricted. The war against ISIS took the lives of over 1,700 Peshmerga, with many thousands more wounded. Nearly two million displaced people had taken refuge in the KRI. With half of the population under 20 years of age, progress on hundreds of private and public projects was suspended, and government salaries were reduced. The growing private sector was adversely affected.

In November 2017, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, summarized the challenges facing the KRG before the U.N. Security Council.



He highlighted that then Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and his cabinet shouldered “a heavy responsibility to find a way out of the political, economic and social crises and respond to the urgent needs of the region, to steer the course of Erbil-Baghdad relations away from confrontation – an indispensable but complicated task.”

Given the punishing impact on the people of the KRI, citizens of Iraq, the KRG faced a daunting challenge of lifting the punitive embargo and preserving the constitutional status of the KRI as a federal region. This required initiatives and deft interaction with both the international community and the Iraqi federal government.

Based on adverse experience with past Iraqi governments and especially during the 1991-2003 embargo, the KRG took proactive measures to guard against isolation and to diversify its economy. This strategy involved diplomatic, economic, and social relations with the international community. KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani enjoyed close personal relations and influential contacts with European and American leaders, and also with governments and other prominent individuals in Ankara, Tehran, and Baghdad.

## **In his December 2017 meeting with President Macron at the Elysée Palace, then PM Nechirvan Barzani requested international support for reopening dialogue between Erbil and Baghdad.**

French President Emmanuel Macron extended an official invitation to the KRG leadership to visit Paris. The closing of national airspace to international flights with Erbil and Slemani airports called for overland travel. Officials of Turkey demonstrably facilitated onward air travel to Paris. In his December 2017 meeting with President Macron at the Elysée Palace, Prime Minister Barzani requested international support for reopening dialogue between Erbil and Baghdad. He highlighted the destabilizing dangers posed by the Shia militias. President Macron responded that he supported de-escalation and would help pave the way for constructive dialogue.



**Despite dysfunctional governance in Baghdad and continued attempts against the Kurdistan Region, the KRG under then PM Nechirvan Barzani weathered the crises and brought the Region to a relatively high level of personal security and political stability.**

This vital initiative heartened the people of the KRI, especially when they saw French President Emmanuel Macron standing alongside KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on television. Over the next two weeks, Prime Minister Barzani traversed Europe, reinforcing the initiative by the French president with other key leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin and Pope Francis in Vatican City.

In January 2018, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani led a delegation to Iran, where he met with Iranian leaders, including President Hassan Rouhani. The results were reopening of border crossing points and resumption of trade.

In February 2018, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani returned to Europe to attend the Munich Security Conference, where he met with several world leaders. For the first time since the referendum, he met with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, which initiated direct negotiations.

In March 2018, nearly six months after the referendum, the embargo on the KRI was lifted. While breaking the impasse did not result in a comprehensive settlement, it ended the confrontation, and it opened the door to continuing the dialogue to promote adherence to the Constitution and resolve outstanding issues.

In July 2018, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani was invited to attend the inauguration of Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Turkey has been the KRI's largest trading partner. Though the referendum strained KRG relations with Turkey, Ankara never closed its border crossings, and oil continued to flow through the KRI-Turkey pipeline. Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani's relationships with Turkey's leaders helped put ties back on track before the inauguration.

Despite dysfunctional governance in Baghdad and continued attempts against the Kurdistan Region, the KRG under then-Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani weathered the crises and brought the Region to a relatively high level of personal security and political stability. With regional and global partners, the KRI has well demonstrated that

it is a valued and trusted partner in peace and economic advancement. A land that has strived to enjoy stability, economic development, and peaceful coexistence of various religions and ethnicities, it has earned the respect of its regional and international partners.

**With regional and global partners, the KRI has well demonstrated that it is a valued and trusted partner in peace and economic advancement.**



## KRG in Washington D.C.

*Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman*

KRG High Representative to the USA

### Bayan Sami Rahman on the ties between the US and the Kurdistan Regional Government.



#### How would you characterize the political, economic, and cultural ties between the US and the KRG?

Over the past five years, the relationship between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the US government has been primarily focused on defeating ISIS. I am very proud that Peshmerga forces and the US military fought side by side, together with Iraqi forces and Coalition partners, to defeat ISIS. It was crucial to maintain a close political, diplomatic, and military relationship throughout that time. We thank the US for standing by us through the ISIS period and for assisting the Peshmerga.

We expect our political relationship to continue but we are now looking at widening our economic and cultural ties. Delegates from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) are included in US exchange programs and we are pleased to see that. Our office is focusing more on trade promotion and strengthening relationships with investors, as well as creating more opportunities for businesses in Kurdistan and the US to meet and deepen their understanding of each other's markets.

In terms of cultural ties, there are various universities that have long-

standing ties with the US. Currently, there are two American universities in the KRI, and we are aware that other US and Canadian institutions are interested in opening campuses. We are fortunate as well that some of the leading American universities are currently conducting archeological work in Kurdistan. This is vital for the preservation of Kurdistan's cultural heritage.

While we have long standing ties with the US, many Americans don't know our culture well. Our office wants to provide more opportunities for Americans to taste our food, hear our music, and join us in our dance.

#### What is your key message to the business community regarding opportunities in the KRI?

The KRI is open for business and can serve as a gateway to the rest of Iraq and neighboring countries. The new cabinet is committed to reform, economic diversification, and administrative efficiency. The PM Masrour Barzani and Deputy PM Qubad Talabani have reiterated their commitment to developing the agriculture, tourism, and industry sectors, and to making Kurdistan even more investment friendly. Our office stands ready to help.

**Our office is focusing more on trade promotion and strengthening relationships with investors, as well as creating more opportunities for businesses in Kurdistan and the US to meet and deepen their understanding of each other's markets.**

## KRG in Paris

*Ali Dolamari*

KRG Representative to France

### Ali Dolamari, KRG Representative to France, on the bilateral ties between France and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

#### How would you characterize bilateral relations between the KRI and France?

France has always supported the KRI in difficult times. The French government has played a very important role in protecting the KRI during the war against ISIS in providing humanitarian aid to refugees and IDPs in the KRI.

The French presidents paid official visits to Erbil. Also, President Masoud Barzani and President Nechirvan Barzani has been received from Elysee Palace for many times. Thanks to these visits, both sides deepen their already strong and deep-rooted ties.

There have been numerous activities between the both sides in recent years. The French and Kurdish Friendship Association in French Parliament has been established. Erbil became a member of the International Francophone Cities organization. Kurdistan's Zeravani forces participated in a ceremony and laid a wreath for the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe monument in Paris by raising the flag of Kurdistan.

We have very special ties with the people and government of France, and we would like to expand our friendship in various fields.

#### What are your top priorities to further strengthen bilateral ties?

We are working on organizing a business and investment conference in cooperation with MEDEAV to attract French investment to the KRI. A high-level delegation from the KRG and leading Kurdish companies will participate to this conference to present opportunities to prominent business leaders in France.

Our second priority is to strengthen academic ties between both sides. Based on the France-KRI cultural agreements, many students from KRI study in France. We would like to see more Kurdish students study in France and complete their academic degrees in French universities. There are currently two French schools with cultural centers in the KRI. We are working on opening branches of some French universities in the KRI.

We are also working on signing a friendship agreement with the Paris region to improve our cultural and business ties.



**There have been numerous activities between the both sides in recent years. The French and Kurdish Friendship Association in French Parliament has been established. Erbil became a member of the International Francophone Cities organization.**

# KRG in London

*Karwan Jamal Tahir*

KRG High Representative to the UK

## Karwan Jamal Tahir on the ties between the UK and the Kurdistan Regional Government.



**One of our top priority is to revive economic relations after five years of severe challenges to the KRI, and further strengthen trade and investment.**

### **What are your Representation's top priorities to further strengthen the bilateral ties between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the United Kingdom (UK)?**

The special and historical relationship between the KRI and the UK is long standing and deep rooted. It should be constantly nurtured and emphasise shared values and interests in many areas, including human rights, democracy, security and practical cooperation. We have so much in common.

The Kurds and Kurdistan make huge contributions to the security and overall political and economic stability of the Middle East and beyond.

It is vital to make sure that the KRI's concerns are heard by British institutions, officials, both Houses of Parliament, and the wider people who have often been sympathetic to Kurdish aspirations.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on the KRI has been active for over a decade and has taken many MPs and peers to Kurdistan so they can see our progress for themselves and then argue for better bilateral relations on the basis of many mutual benefits.

Our Representation is working steadfastly to create more links between our two nations through government-to-government interactions, scientific and education links, and cultural connections. We work with officials and business bodies to expand areas of interest between the KRI and the UK.

One of our top priority is to revive economic relations after five years of severe challenges to the KRI, and further strengthen trade and investment. Such commercial ties are at the heart of our endeavours so both sides can benefit from the opportunities and jobs that trade and investment creates. In turn, the growth of economic ties relies on peace and security which creates a conducive environment for prosperity. The KRG has invested hugely in maintaining and strengthening security in Kurdistan.

Our other strong ambition is to encourage direct air links run by British Airways and maybe others between Britain and the KRI. We want to see more British tourists taking advantage of the wonderful cities and countryside in the KRI and we are confident they will like what they see and that will build further support for us.



### **Which of Kurdistan's economic sectors offer the most potential to UK businesses? What is your key message to the UK business community?**

The KRI remains an emerging market, offering opportunities for businesses across multiple sectors. This is why the KRG has put so much effort into attracting British investors and we are proud that over 140 British companies operate in the KRI.

Developing the oil and gas sector was vital in the last decade, but KRG policy now is to shift away from excessive reliance on energy revenues. Economic diversification is vital for sustainable long-term economic growth and is central to my government's economic and social strategies. That is why my government has announced that its investment priorities are agriculture, industry, and tourism, where UK companies could find many opportunities.

Economics and politics are inseparable from security and stability, which are vital to the wellbeing of businesses. My central message is that we offer security and stability, as well as substantial reforms to encourage and assure foreign investors, which will allow the KRI to become a major business destination. I ask businesses and people to take a good look at what we offer and recognize our huge potential.

**We offer security and stability, as well as substantial reforms to encourage and assure foreign investors, which will allow the KRI to become a major business destination.**

# China in Erbil

*Ni Ruchi*

Chinese Consul General in Erbil

## Ni Ruchi discusses the growing commercial and cultural ties between China and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



**At the most difficult time of the war against terrorism in 2014, the Chinese government decided to open the consulate general in Erbil, which fully demonstrates China's firm support for the fight against terrorism in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.**

### On the relations between China and Kurdistan Region of Iraq

China places great importance on developing its relations with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). At the most difficult time of the war against terrorism in 2014, the Chinese government decided to open the consulate general in Erbil, which fully demonstrates China's firm support for the fight against terrorism in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. Over the past five years, with the strong support of the leaders of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), friendly exchanges and cooperation between China and the KRI have steadily improved in various fields. We seek to expand our cooperation with the KRG to continue to further develop China-KRI relations.

### On the business ties

Chinese enterprises have constructed and invested in cement plants and steel structure plants; actively participated in oil exploration activities; and provided professional skills training programs in the KRI. Since 2018, companies from both sides have enjoyed interactions in the fields of energy, electricity, agriculture and environmental protection. Huawei and Korek Telecom have signed cooperation agreements. In addition, two Chinese companies have signed off on oil field waste gas recycling and utilization projects and cement plant projects.

Chinese enterprises are open to all and any economic and trade cooperation with the KRI. This includes strengthening cooperation in the fields of agriculture, industry, tourism, energy and infrastructure construction, which are also the key areas mentioned in the KRG's agenda. If the KRG refines its policies on investment, more Chinese enterprises will be attracted to invest in the KRI.

At present, there are more than a dozen Chinese companies in the KRI, such as Sinoma, DQE, BGP, Huawei. Nearly 3,000 Chinese citizens are working in the Region.

### On the cultural relations

We have close people-people exchanges. The Consulate has invited its Kurdish friends from all walks of life to participate in various training courses in China such as a training course for young and middle-aged diplomats and a course on maintaining cultural heritage.

We have invited many young Kurdish people and media professionals to visit China. The Chinese government has provided scholarships for 10 Kurdish youths to study in China in 2019. More than 50 officials and technical personnel have completed short-term training courses in China in 2019.

The Chinese Confucius Institute and Salahaddin University signed a cooperation agreement in 2019. The Salahaddin University opened a Chinese language major. Beijing University is also preparing for the opening of a Kurdish language major.

### On the medium-term expectations regarding the Kurdistan's economic progress

The KRI enjoys a good geographical location, abundant resources and huge development potential. Now, the war against terror has ended and the new government has been successfully established. We believe that under the wise leadership of the KRG, economic development can return to the right track.



**Chinese enterprises are open to all and any economic and trade cooperation with the KRI. This includes strengthening cooperation in the fields of agriculture, industry, tourism, energy, and infrastructure construction.**

Q&amp;A

# Canada in Erbil

*Ashley Durec*

Head of the Erbil Office of the Canadian Embassy to Iraq

## Ashley Durec on relations between Canada and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).



**There is a lot of potential for the growth of cooperation between Canada and the KRI, particularly in agricultural research and education cooperation.**

### On Canada's office in Erbil

The main areas of our work are political relations with the KRG, human capacity development, trade, and cultural relations. We are working on promoting key Canadian priorities, such as security, good governance, and the empowerment of women in the KRI.

### On IDP's & Refugees

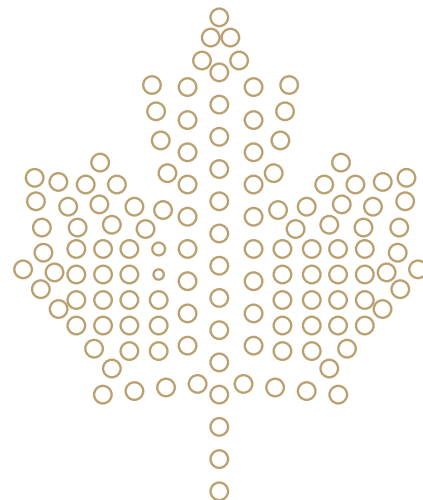
Canadian humanitarian assistance addresses the well-being and needs of IDPs and refugees. Canadian assistance includes the provision of health services, food assistance, addressing emergency shelter needs, and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) projects, such as the rehabilitation of water infrastructure.

### On the trade ties between Canada and the KRI

Currently, most Canadian exports to Iraq enter the country via the KRI. These exports are primarily agricultural products, consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, lumber and wood products, and vehicles.

### On future cooperation

There is a lot of potential for the growth of cooperation between Canada and the KRI, particularly in agricultural research and education cooperation.



Q&amp;A

# Japan in Erbil

*Katsumi Moriyasu*

Former Head of the Consular Office of Japan in Erbil

## Katsumi Moriyasu on Japan's key initiatives in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).



### What are Japan's key projects in the KRI?

The Japanese government is very active in extending development assistance to build infrastructure projects covering electricity, sewerage and environmental issues in the KRI. We are currently working on four key projects. The first one is a water supply improvement project in Halabja. The second project is on electricity, specifically grid networking, and human resource development at the Ministry of Electricity. The third project is hydropower plant construction project in Duhok. The last one is wastewater treatment plant in Erbil.

### Can you elaborate the wastewater treatment plant project?

We are very proud to become a partner of the KRG and are happy that it

chose Japan to be a reliable partner the financing and technology for this project.

This is the first sewage plant in Iraq and is very important to the KRI. We are concerned about the degradation of the environment in the region, where sewage is often released underground. So, this is a very strategic project to preserve the nature and environment of the KRI.

The project is designed and implemented by Japanese engineers. It may be divided into four stages. The first stage of the project will be finalized in 10 years.

### What is Japan's contribution to human capacity development in the KRI?

Human capacity development in the KRI is one of the main pillars that we pursue. We have invited around 1,000 people from the KRG for training in Japan. We extend expertise to young Kurdish candidates in various fields.

We are eager to send Iraqi students to study at Japanese universities. We have four or five places open to Iraqi students, including those from the KRI. Currently, two Kurdish students are studying in Hiroshima and in Kyoto. We believe that they will become important contributors to further development in the region.

### How do you assess the KRI's tourism offerings to Japanese visitors?

The KRI has a huge potential to attract tourists from all over the world, including Japan. Tourists in Japan are always looking to Middle Eastern destinations with enthusiasm and curiosity. I hope Japanese tourists are attracted and enchanted by the region's beautiful historical sites.

### You have been living in the KRI in the last three years. How would you assess the security in the KRI and Kurdish culture?

People of Kurdistan are very open-minded and kind and show no discrimination or ill will towards anyone.

The streets in Erbil and the wider KRI show no sign of security risk. We enjoy the safety provided by the Peshmerga soldiers. Kurdish security forces are very capable of keeping safety for both citizens and foreign visitors, and we are indebted to all the personnel in the security sector. Today I don't see any sign of tension and there is no reason to fear coming to the KRI. I feel very secure here. That is thanks to the KRI's security forces.

## 02

Chapter two:

# Economy & Business



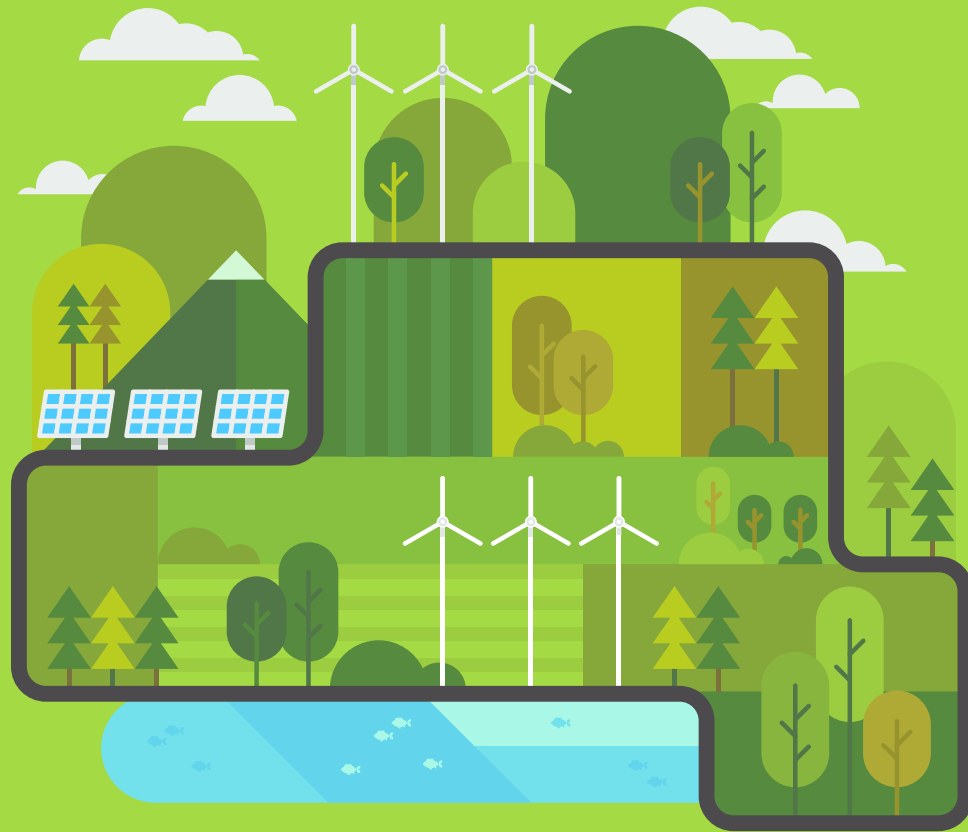
**The KRG is stepping up structural reforms aimed at diversifying the economy and developing the private sector in order to provide the right commercial environment conducive to new business growth.**

The Snapshot

## *The Winds of Change in Kurdistan's Economy*

**The Kurdistan Region of Iraq starts a fresh and ambitious economic development journey towards establishing a sustainable economy.**

Kurdistan is experiencing significant transformation at the highest levels of the public and private sectors to ensure long-term growth. The KRG's economic reform agenda, which includes diversifying the economy, reducing debt, boosting financial stability, strengthening the private sector, committing to transparency, and fighting corruption, aims to accelerate the development of Kurdistan's economic landscape in the years to come.



**Vision:**  
**Strengthening non-oil revenue, establishing a knowledge-based economy, instilling business confidence, and facilitating the business environment to build a sustainable economy.**

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq witnessed extraordinary economic growth between 2006 and 2014. The oil and gas companies' commitment to over \$15 billion in investments in Kurdistan's energy sector and regional stability laid the groundwork for this rapid economic growth. Annual per capita income increased from \$800 in 2006 to \$7,000 in 2014. The investment in Kurdistan also increased from \$438 million to

around \$40 billion from 2006 to 2014. Kurdistan's solid economic growth and skyrocketing investment slowed down due to war against ISIS and the plunge in oil revenues. The ninth cabinet of the KRG that came into power in June 2019 has bold plans to attain the same level of growth as 2006-2014. In order to revive the economy, diversification and substantial reforms are needed.

**The KRG aims to diversify the economy, streamline the investment process, and drive towards manufacturing in order to develop a sustainable economic model.**

**Diversification**

Since economic stability has been set as top priority for Kurdistan's future, the KRG's strategic initiatives focus on shifting the economy away from a single-income source toward multiple sources.

The economic slowdown stemming from the fluctuation in oil prices was a wake-up call for KRG leadership. Taking into account the IMF's forecast that predicts oil prices at around \$65 until 2023, Kurdistan can no longer depend on oil revenues. The necessary steps should be taken to ensure long-term sustainability of the economy and to facilitate Kurdistan's path of growth.

The short- to-medium term economic engine will still be the hydrocarbon industry.

However, the KRG economic vision foresees that development of agriculture, industry, and tourism has the potential to generate economic growth, and could become leading driving forces in Kurdistan's vision of economic diversification.

**The short-to-medium term economic engine will still be the hydrocarbon industry.**





# 3.1m

**Kurdistan saw record visitor numbers, as around 3.1 million tourists.**

## Tourism

The tourism sector is one of the three key pillars of economic growth identified in the KRG's economic reform plan. The government's strategy highlights the intention to support the growth of the archeological tourism segment by focusing investment on locations with the potential to become essential destinations for tourists primarily seeking an experience of history and culture. In 2019, according to the Board of Tourism data, Kurdistan saw record visitor numbers, as around 3.1 million tourists visited the Region. The KRG anticipates welcoming 7 million visitors by 2025.

## Agriculture

The agriculture sector has the potential to become the backbone of Kurdistan's economy. Kurdistan's suitable climate and abundant water resources provide the Region the basis of a strong agriculture sector, however the industry has not been developed for decades. Nevertheless, the KRG is keen to build a strong agricultural infrastructure to make the sector a significant source of employment and contributor to the Region's non-oil economy.

## Private Sector

The government is stepping up structural reforms aimed at further developing the private sector in order to provide the right commercial environment conducive to risk-taking for the economy to grow. The KRG has targets to increase the number of SMEs and homegrown startups. The leadership plans to capitalize on a young population (nearly 50% of Kurdistan's population is under the age of 20) and build an economy characterized by innovation and equal opportunity for the people of Kurdistan.

## Infrastructure

In the long term, Kurdistan's economic development will be determined by the ways infrastructure investment is implemented. Transportation networks, silos, electricity lines and water pipelines have been deemed a priority for infrastructure investment, and the KRG is directing significant levels of funding towards these projects. The government announced a \$420 million allocation for infrastructure development in October 2019.

# \$12bn

**worth of projects have been approved since June 2019**

## Industry

The industrial sector plays a central role in the KRG's long-term economic development plan: expanding the scope of private sector activity, encouraging the shift to value-added activities, creating jobs and building a production-based economy. Official figures reveal that industry represents the biggest capital investments, valued at around \$20 billion, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to date. Kurdistan aims to introduce industrial zones and investor-friendly reforms in order to push for initiatives to expand industries to boost local products and achieve self-sufficiency.

**Kurdistan's young population, improving infrastructure and reformed legislation offer an excellent environment for international businesses.**



## Public Sector

The KRG has set its sights on reducing huge public expenditure and growing deficit. The KRG introduced tough fiscal consolidation and rebalancing measures, supported by extensive spending cuts and wide restructuring among government departments.

## Transparency

Kurdistan aims to set the pace on boosting transparency in the Region as fighting corruption is a top priority of the ninth cabinet's reform agenda. The KRG foresees that transparency in government revenues, taxation systems, and tendering processes is crucial in getting government revenues back on track, for winning the battle with corruption, and opening a new phase in relations between the government and the people of Kurdistan. Thus, the KRG aggressively pushes for digitalization, which will cut bureaucracy and provide greater transparency in all sectors.

**The reform agenda announced by the KRG highlights Kurdistan's promising trajectory towards transforming its economy in the next four years.**



The Snapshot

# Banking

**The Kurdistan Region of Iraq continues to strive to create an effective modern banking sector. Here are important things to know about Kurdistan banking sector.**

## Central Bank of Iraq

While the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has used its political autonomy to fashion a largely business and investment friendly environment, the banking sector falls entirely under the purview of the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) in Baghdad. According to Article 114 of the federal constitution, banks operating in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) must be licensed by the CBI, which has the sole authority to regulate the banking sector and issue licenses for banks to operate in Iraq.

## Cash-based economy

Despite the involvement of foreign branches and the continued growth of local banks, the KRI's banking sector requires further development. People still prefer to use cash rather than cards, and wire transfers are generally slow. However, the local population has gradually been embracing banking practices in recent years.

## Reform

The KRG has repeatedly expressed a desire for reform in the banking and finance sectors. However, the task of creating a truly modern banking sector will require substantial reform in Baghdad. The continued operation of local banks, coupled with further involvement from established foreign banks is expected to force changes in current banking regulations.

## Total number of banks

In addition to three large state-owned banks, there are 25 private banks and 13 foreign banks operating in the KRI. The majority of private international banks working in the KRI are from Turkey and Lebanon.

## Capital Requirement

**A minimum equity capital of 250 billion IQD, an amount equal to roughly \$215 million, is required to establish a bank in Iraq.**

The CBI policy requires that in order to open a branch in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, foreign banks must have a minimum equity capital of \$50 million.



## Islamic Banking

Kurdistan is home to a promising Islamic banking industry. The majority of the population prefers to utilize Islamic banking practices. There are currently six local Islamic banks in operation, along with foreign banks such as Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank and Al Baraka. Among the most successful local Islamic banks is Kurdistan International Bank, which is the only Islamic financial institution among Iraq's five largest banks.

## Loans

Banks in the KRI are generally involved in personal banking rather than providing loans or financing for long-term investment projects. Kurdistan's insurance sector remains very limited, mortgages are virtually non-existent, and a web of confusing regulations contributes to inefficiency.

Q&amp;A

# Boosting Trade

*Kamal Muslim Saeed*

Minister of Trade and Industry

**KRG Minister of Trade & Industry Muslim Saeed on the Ministry's priorities.**



## On the environment for industry in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)

Over the last few years, the KRG has undertaken institutional reforms to improve the environment for industrial development. We have simplified procedures to reduce the time needed to obtain licenses and revised the forms related to the payment of taxes and fees. Industry, which plays a critical role in our economic development policy, is one of the sectors prioritized by the KRG. In the last two years, 151 industrial projects were approved by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Currently, there are 3,605 factories in the KRI. I strongly believe that investment in industry will increase in the coming years.

## On the key objectives and priorities

Building a solid legal framework, undertaking institutional reforms, building industrial zones, and boosting our trade ties with our neighbors are our priorities. We will continue working to eliminate any obstacles to trade and industry, opening the way for local and international investment. We will strengthen Kurdistan's trade ties with other countries and strengthen relations between our public and private sectors at home.

**Building a solid legal framework, undertaking institutional reforms, building industrial zones, and boosting our trade ties with our neighbors are our priorities.**

**Our aim is to lay a strong foundation to boost the investment climate in the KRI and to achieve sustainable growth. We aim to open up our economy and attract large companies around the region to invest here.**

# TRADE: ON THE RISE

*Foreign trade has developed rapidly since 2006 and has been playing a crucial role in Kurdistan's economy.*

### Vision

The KRG aims to create a platform as a business enabler. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) represents a strong platform for entering the Iraqi market, which contains 39 million consumers. The region needs a secure and business-friendly destination like KRI to facilitate trade with Iraq. The KRI allows businesses to benefit from the transit of goods moving through Kurdistan to other parts of Iraq and helps regional trade. Considering its visionary leadership, robust security, and investment-friendly regulations, Kurdistan has the potential to become the heart of Iraq's manufacturing and trade hub.

### The Route

Ibrahim Khalil crossing, between Turkey and the KRI, serves as the main crossing in Kurdistan's foreign trade activities. Erbil International Airport and Slemani International Airport also contribute to enhancing the role of Kurdistan's foreign trade in the economy.

### Free Trade Zones

The KRG has plans to establish free trade zones to play a pivotal role in increasing commercial exchange between Kurdistan and the region. The preliminary approval has been received to establish the zones.

### Industrial Zones

Building industrial zones is also on the KRG's agenda. The budget has been approved and an area of around 1million sqm has been allocated for construction of industrial zones.



**We have sent four key draft laws: consumer protection, anti-monopoly, industrial development and import & export, to the Council of Ministers to support the economic infrastructure in the KRI.**

Fathi Al-Mударis, Advisor, Ministry of Trade and Industry

**\$5.6 billion**

### Top Trade Partners

1. **Turkey**
2. **Iran**
3. **UAE**
4. **Lebanon**
5. **Jordan**

Currently, Turkey is Kurdistan Region of Iraq's largest trading partner with around \$5.6 billion in bilateral trade in 2019. Over 60,000 trucks crossed from Turkey into the KRI monthly. In 2009, only 485 Turkish companies were registered in the KRI. As of January 2020, 1,421 Turkish companies are operating in the KRI.

### Companies

Total number of registered companies reached 27,291 in 2020 from 17,348 in 2013 in the KRI. In terms of foreign companies, 3,252 foreign companies have been registered in the KRI.

| Total number of local companies | Total number of local companies |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>27,291</b> (2020)            | <b>3,252</b> (2020)             |
| <b>17,348</b> (2013)            | <b>2,314</b> (2013)             |

Turkey ●

**60.000 trucks**

Over 60,000 trucks crossed from Turkey into the KRI monthly.



The Snapshot

# Investment First

Kurdistan is welcoming regional and international investors and entrepreneurs attracted by the prospect of fresh business opportunities, a warm welcome, robust security, and improving quality of life.

Kurdistan Board of Investment has issued a total of 896 licenses with a total investment capital of \$52.1 billion since 2006. Within these data, \$42.3 billion belonged to local companies, and \$6 billion to foreign investors from 23 different countries. Twenty-seven joint foreign investment projects worth \$3.6 billion has been completed since 2006.

**\$52.1** total investment

**\$6** billion to foreign investors from 23 different countries.



## Investment by years

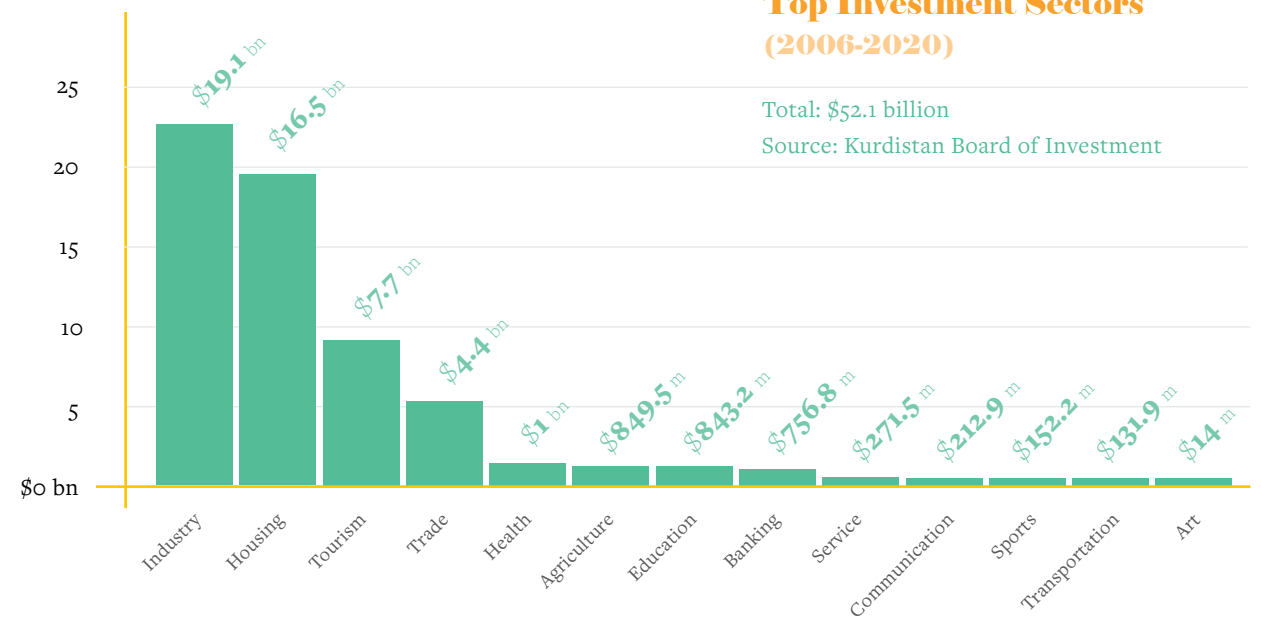


Total: \$52.1 billion  
Source: Kurdistan Board of Investment

**Kurdistan investment law stipulates that foreign investors can repatriate their profits in full, are treated equally under the law, are entitled to all the capital of any project, and enjoy the same rights as local investors to purchase and own land.**

In 2019, a total of 68 investment projects were issued with a total value of approximately \$2.7 billion, indicating that the infrastructure and economy of Kurdistan continue to expand considerably.

## Top Investment Sectors (2006-2020)



Total: \$52.1 billion  
Source: Kurdistan Board of Investment

**A foreign investor shall be entitled to send capital back abroad upon winding up or disposal of the project without prejudice to applicable laws and regulations regarding taxes and customs.**

Kurdistan investment law provides tax incentives and exemptions for foreign investors who are involved in certain sectors such as electricity, agriculture, health and environment, infrastructure and education. The KRG intends to step up structural reforms aimed at further attracting investment to these sectors.

**New arrivals find it easy to integrate. An open society is matched by a level playing field for business and opportunities for people with skills and capital.**

**FDI Countries**

Out of a total of 23 source countries, the top source countries for foreign direct investment are the UAE, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, the US, New Zealand, Germany, Iran, Sweden, and the UK.

**TOP 10 FDI Countries**



Source: Kurdistan Board of Investment

**The KRG's initiative to attract investors and skilled talent will enhance the Region's workforce.**

**The Outlook**

The KRG's investment policy focuses on boosting investor confidence and building a true partnership between the public and private sectors in order to attain its long-term economic sustainability goals. It is expected that public-private partnership will create new investment opportunities and assist the flow of capital and knowledge in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

**Considering its visionary leadership, robust security, and investment-friendly regulations, Kurdistan has the potential to become the heart of Iraq's manufacturing hub.**

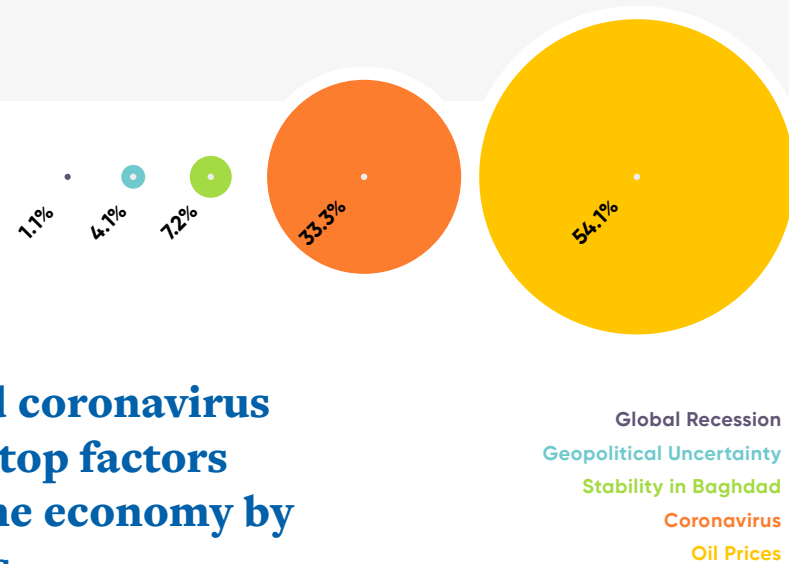
The KRG aims to create a platform as a business enabler. Kurdistan represents a strong platform for entering the Iraqi market, which contains 39 million consumers. The region needs a secure and investment-friendly destination like Kurdistan to facilitate doing business and trade with Iraq. Kurdistan allows businesses to benefit from the transit of goods moving through Kurdistan to other parts of Iraq and helps regional trade. Considering its visionary leadership, robust security, and investment-friendly regulations, Kurdistan has the potential to become the heart of Iraq's manufacturing hub.



# The Survey: Business Outlook 2020 —

We interviewed business leaders to gather their assessments of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's business landscape.

What are the key factors that could impact the economy in the year ahead?



Falling oil prices and coronavirus lockdown chosen as top factors that would impact the economy by 87.4% of respondents.

1 October 2019 – 31 December 2019

What are your expectations for business conditions in the year ahead?



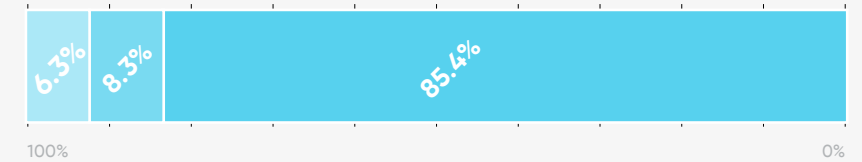
Business confidence in the KRI has remarkably increased after the establishment of the 9th KRG cabinet in June 2019. Following the formation of the new administration, business leaders have been optimistic about local market conditions, with

the majority anticipating an uplift in revenues and profit projections between October and December 2019. The data also reveals that 84.3 percent of leaders felt economic conditions had improved compared to a year ago.

**84.3%** of leaders felt economic conditions had improved

1 January 2020 – 31 March 2020

What are your expectations for business conditions in the year ahead?

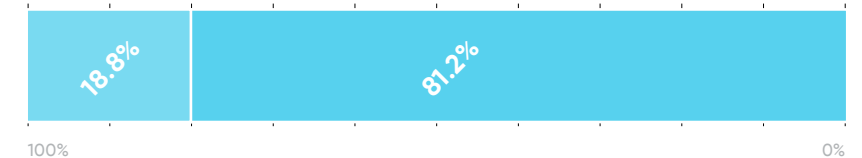


However, business confidence of the economy has deteriorated significantly following coronavirus lockdown and sharp drop in oil prices from \$65 to \$25 between January and March 2020.

The KRI's economy is heavily reliant on oil. Therefore, 85.4% of the business leaders believe that economic conditions will be impacted negatively in the short term if oil prices stay around \$30-\$40 during 2020.

Despite concerns and uncertainty in market conditions, CEOs continue to look for new ways to compete in the market. Business leaders will also focus on improving their operational efficiency.

How would you characterize the KRG's economic diversification agenda?



81.2% of the business leaders responding to our survey characterize the KRG's economic reform program as positive.

Majority of CEOs anticipate that the government's economic diversification policy will create new opportunities over the next three years.

What are your company's plans in terms of total headcount in the year ahead?

37.5% of the business owners and CEOs say that they will maintain current employment numbers in their companies in 2020. Moreover, 48.9% state that they might decrease their employment in 2020.

What are the key challenges in doing business in the KRI?

The KRG's new tax regime is the most dominant concern to the business leaders and it is perceived as the biggest risk to the viability of their businesses. 38.5% of business leaders cited concerns about increasing tax burdens as a key challenge.

Finding the right mix of skilled and knowledgeable workers who can contribute to business growth is one of the key challenges in the KRI. 52.1% of the respondents have cited skills shortages in the workforce as one of the key challenges in the local market.

Q&amp;A

# Expanding the Commercial Ties

*Steve Lutes*

Vice President, Middle East Affairs  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

## Steve Lutes on the U.S. Chamber's activities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), and the most promising sectors to US businesses in the KRI.



**American companies ranging from small budding entrepreneurs to large global leaders can make a difference in the KRI.**

### Can you elaborate on some of the points regarding your collaboration with the KFCCI?

The U.S. Chamber welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with fellow chamber organizations, such as the Kurdistan Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KFCCI). The essence of the MoU is to provide a bridge between the private sectors in the United States and the KRI. We are actually extending an invitation to the KFCCI to bring a delegation of business leaders to the United States to explore opportunities to trade and do business here. Likewise, we look forward to organizing and leading a delegation of American companies to return to Erbil and Northern Iraq at some point in 2020. Beyond such delegations and exchange of information, it is incumbent upon our organizations to work together to remove regulatory burdens and issues as they arise which create barriers to expanded trade and investment relationships.

### Which of the KRI's sectors offer the most potential to US businesses?

There are a number of sectors in which American businesses are well equipped to help fulfill the needs and economic diversification goals of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq by bringing their innovation, knowledge and technologies to contribute to the economy. In diverse areas spanning across health and digital opportunities to agriculture and infrastructure projects, American companies ranging from small budding entrepreneurs to large global leaders can make a difference in the KRI. I believe they will find that they are pushing on an open door when they come and explore these commercial and investment opportunities. We also cannot forget the important role the energy sector plays and the corresponding opportunities to develop and commercialize these resources. We applaud efforts to enhance the business environment and diversify



the economy, and the bottom line from my perspective is that there is an opportunity for American businesses from A to Z of the economy. When we fail to engage in those opportunities, then our competitors will fill the void.

### How can the U.S. Chamber of Commerce help companies looking to work in the KRI to take advantage of the opportunities here?

There is a lot we are doing already, but we can always do more. First and foremost, you have to show up, and we have done this by bringing delegations of businessmen and women to the Kurdistan Region of

Iraq to meet with decision-makers in government and local business executives. There is nothing better than seeing things first-hand and meeting with people on the ground to really understand the situation and opportunities. We have also made a point to support key events which showcase commercial and investment opportunities in Northern Iraq. For example, in November 2019, we were a supporting organization of the Ninewa Investment Forum and worked closely with the U.S. government to encourage American businesses and investors to participate. We also host a number of events in Washington, DC to help educate U.S. companies about opportunities to do business and

**We applaud efforts to enhance the business environment and diversify the economy, and the bottom line from my perspective is that there is an opportunity for American businesses from A to Z of the economy.**

invest in the KRI. We are also working to officially establish an AmCham in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This would be an accredited, locally-based affiliate that would be on the front lines working to grow and deepen commercial ties.

### From a safety standpoint, how would you define the security and safety in the KRI?

I am certainly not a security expert, and will always defer to those who are. Having said this, I have been traveling to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for many years and continue to do so and have never had any issues.

The Brand

# Al-Hayat

## Integrating Global Standards with the Local Culture

**Al-Hayat has integrated global standards with the local culture to be able to represent PepsiCo and to give their customers the best.**

The majority of the local businesses have been profoundly affected in response to the financial crisis in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) between 2015 and 2017. During this severe economic turbulence, instead of sinking, Al-Hayat's senior executives, who has over 80 years of experience in multinational corporations (MNCs), has changed almost everything from A to Z to elevate the company to an international level and put the company on the path to what it has now today: double digit growth.

Customer-centric business model, brand-new facility, strict quality control standards, strong distribution and cutting-edge services are the

leading factors behind the outstanding performance that Al-Hayat has shown in recent years.

### **Game-Changer: Direct Distribution**

Al-Hayat has built a very strong distribution model in the KRI in terms of coverage breadth and depth in the last three years. Today, they can reach more customers in their territory than anyone in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) business. Moreover, the company reaches customers more frequently than anyone else, which helps them deliver a superior level of service.

Al-Hayat's biggest move took place in shifting to a direct distribution model in 2017. Thanks to the transition from distributor to direct, the company had around 20-25 percent growth year on year. The company used to hit 60 percent of the shops in the KRI. Today the number has reached 88 percent. Al-Hayat aims to be in every shop which has capability to represent them, and they are on their way to getting there.

### **Optimizing Efficiency**

Al-Hayat made substantial investments to renovate its facility and change its machines to elevate its plant to an international level. Since the company upgraded its plant, Al-Hayat's Erbil facility has been ranked as one of the best in class for Pepsi in the MENA region.

Thanks to renovating its facility and modernizing its equipment the company produces its product range in significantly larger quantities and more efficiently, using less energy and water. The renewed facility has also allowed the company to reduce its environmental footprint.

Adapting the model to improve its efficiency has also enabled Al-Hayat to use its available resources

much more efficiently. The company has integrated an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to optimize production to enhance its efficiency. Al-Hayat is closely working with Oracle on its ERP system.

**Since Al-Hayat upgraded its plant in Erbil, the company's facility has been ranked as one of the best in class for Pepsi in the MENA region.**





### Consumer Centric Approach

Analyzing the local market and customers' preferences is key to success for Al-Hayat management. The company's customer centric approach had made the global brand Pepsi much more relevant to local consumers in the KRI.

"You need to understand the local culture in order to make the most of the international standards being applied. Thus, we integrate global standards with the local culture to be able to represent PepsiCo and to give our customers the best," Al-Hayat CEO Rashad Korkis says.

### Level-up

Training has been playing a crucial role in the company's outstanding performance in recent years. Al-Hayat management aspires to get the right set of skills for its employees to push their level-up on a continuous basis.

Al-Hayat implements the highest level of systems in HR, such as adapting PepsiCo system to fit local market needs. The company has weekly in-house training for its employees. The training includes English language, computer skills, sales and HR. To improve the skills of the senior managers, the company send them abroad regularly.

**"We have over 500 employees. Ninety-five percent of our workforce is local. We have here a culture of training and of surpassing targets,"**

**Rashad Korkis, CEO,  
Al-Hayat**

Al-Hayat is a strong believer in the fact that women's empowerment is one of the most important enablers of sustainable human development. The company has committed to building a gender-balanced organization and set a clear ambition to increase the number of women in management positions in the years to come.

## Al-Hayat's product quality standard stays at the top thanks to the changes the company has made in the last two years.

### Top-Quality Control Standards

From purchasing the raw materials to storing them in the warehouse in Erbil, until materials to production, and from production to the finished goods and to the market, until the product is sold to the consumer, Al-Hayat maintains PepsiCo's international quality control standards.

The company receives a monthly quality standards report, called 3D Quality, from a third party which takes random samples from the plant and the market and sends it to their lab in Europe. The third party checks all the parameters, the flavor and all the other details of the product.

Senior management is proud of the results they receive regarding quality control standards. The company's product quality standard stays at the top thanks to the changes the company has made in recent years.

Al-Hayat innovates in terms of quality control to ensure that every product is of exactly the same high quality. "Our quality standards are based on PepsiCo International, and this is something that we cannot play with. We always have to be on the highest level," Al-Hayat senior executives say.



### Vision

Al-Hayat senior executives foresee that Kurdistan and wider Iraq present many opportunities to manufacturers of FMCG in the medium to long term. The regional or international FMCG brands can use Kurdistan as a base to access Iraq's 40 million consumer market, for which Kurdistan offers government incentives for investment, robust security and stability.

Since its establishment in 2006, Al-Hayat has been operating in the beverage segment. However, the company has future expansion plans for FMCG products. Kurdistan has a very young population; 50 percent of the KRI's population is under 20 years old. The economy shows positive trends since the beginning of 2019, meaning that consumption will keep increasing. Therefore, Al-Hayat looks for FMCG products that maximize synergies with its existing product portfolio and that they can sell through distribution channels in which they are already strong.

In terms of manufacturing, Al-Hayat represents a tremendous opportunity for companies coming from other markets. They can replicate their business model to any FMCG company in the KRI. Their infrastructure is ready, distribution is the strongest. They plug and play. So, they can set up a customer-designed manufacturing process quickly, efficiently, and at great value.

Al-Hayat is an attractive partner for businesses that want to establish their brands in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

## Al-Hayat looks for new FMCG products that maximize synergies with its existing product portfolio and that they can sell through distribution channels in which they are already strong.



The Brand

# Sardar GROUP

**50+**  
years  
experience

Sardar Group is a pioneer in Iraq’s automotive sector, with more than 50+ years of experience. The company’s history dates back to the 1960s, when Al-Haj Hussein Al-Bebany, founder of the business, started trading vehicles in Kirkuk. During the early 1980s the company’s business shifted to auto-trading. Sardar Cars became an established name throughout Iraq after the company moved from Kirkuk to Baghdad in the 1990s and built the largest covered car showroom in the country.

In the early 2000s a desire to move from trading to providing customers with comprehensive automotive solutions led Sardar Group to leverage its existing operations and diversify its business activities to include trading, the leasing of vehicles, equipment and machinery, and the provision of aftersales service support.

Today, Sardar Group represents globally respected automotive brands and heavy construction equipment and machinery exemplified by the following brands: Toyota & Hino (in partnership with Sumitomo Corporation), Jaguar, Land Rover, Volvo Construction Equipment, Polaris, Doosan and TOTO. Sardar Group’s global network spans Iraq, Japan, Jordan and the UAE. The company plans to expand its operations to other markets in 2021 and beyond.

**“Born with the desire to constantly innovate, I strive to blend our local expertise with international functionality, as I believe that things can and will only get better. Our mission is to serve Iraq and introduce international products that will contribute positively to the advancement of people’s lives and standards of living.”**

**Sardar Al-Bebany,  
Chairman & CEO, Sardar Group**

### Toyota Iraq

The Toyota Motor Corporation appointed Toyota Iraq as the exclusive distributor of Toyota products in Iraq in March 2016. Toyota Iraq is a joint venture of Sardar Group and Sumitomo Corporation. Over 90% of its employees are drawn from the local population.

### SAS Automotive Services – Authorized Toyota Dealer

SAS was established in 2013 and is the only Authorized Toyota Dealer to have a National Network of branches spanning from the North to South of Iraq in most major cities such as Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Slemani and Duhok. In 2016 SAS was appointed as an authorized dealer by Toyota Iraq and has continued its objective of being the first choice by providing top-quality sales and aftersales services. Since 2013, SAS has serviced over 300,000 vehicles and its staff is composed of over 90% local Iraqi nationals.

### O MO TE NA SHI COMPLEX

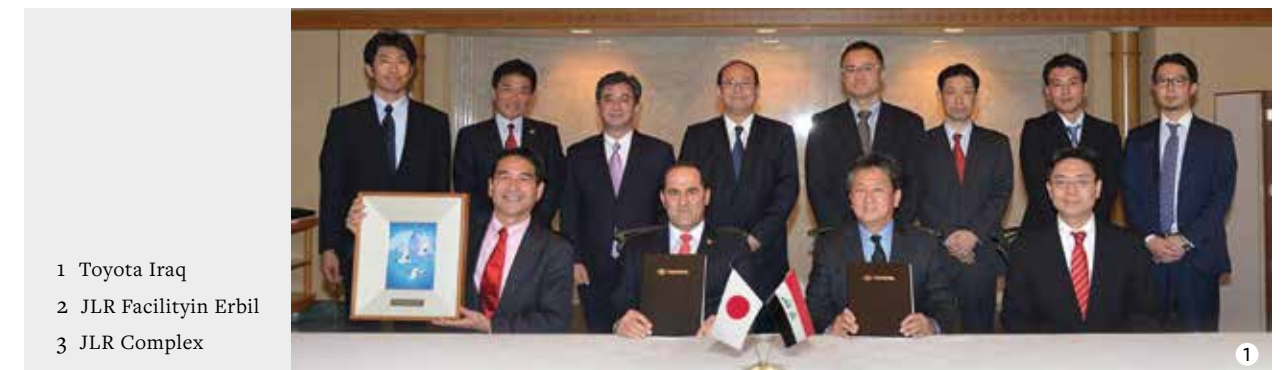
Sardar Group’s O Mo Te Na Shi (“Sincere Hospitality to All”) complex will be one of the largest projects in Kirkuk and will include Toyota and HINO facilities, offering 400 employment opportunities to the people of the city.

### Jaguar Land Rover New Facility in Erbil

STA, an official importer of the Jaguar Land Rover, broke ground in October 2019 on the Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) facility, an investment project in Erbil. The new facility will have an area of 7,546m<sup>2</sup>, with a buildup area of 17,420m<sup>2</sup> featuring a 26-car display showroom, a 20-bay service/detail workshop and a drive through reception area that offers in-lane service diagnostics. The estimated cost for this project is \$7 million. This facility is expected to be operational by June 2021.

### Sardar Trading Agencies

Sardar Trading Agencies (STA) is a core company of Sardar Group, and has more than 50 years of experience in the automotive segment. STA signed an agreement with Jaguar Land Rover Ltd. in 2010. The company has developed a strong retailer network, with state-of-art facilities in Bagdad, Erbil, Slemani, and Duhok, with a vast workforce comprising mostly Iraqi nationals. STA strives for sustainable growth, and its aim is to be the leading company in the Iraqi market.



- 1 Toyota Iraq
- 2 JLR Facility in Erbil
- 3 JLR Complex





## Sardar Group contributes to human capacity development by building its employees' skills through corporate business training.

### TOTO

Al-Sardar Group opened TOTO showrooms in Baghdad in March 2018, and in Erbil in October 2019. TOTO, which was established in 1917, is a global leader in innovation and premier supplier of high-quality, hygienic, eco-friendly products designed to improve cleanliness and comfort. The aim of Sardar Group is to improve the sanitary standards in Iraq by introducing the most advanced Japanese technology and concepts. TOTO also focuses on families and individuals who are aged, sick, handicapped, or pregnant, as well as helping women to live easier and healthier lives through our Washlet line of products.

### POLARIS

Be-Hawta is a core company of Sardar Group and has been the official distributor of Polaris products in Iraq since 2013. Be-Hawta/Polaris Iraq is headquartered in Erbil and has branches in Baghdad and Slemani. It primarily sells and maintains all-terrain vehicles such as the RZR, Ranger and Sportsman models, military vehicles (MRZR and Sportsman MV) and electric vehicles, including GEM and Goupil.

### What are the key driving factors behind Sardar Group's growth?

One of the main driving forces of our growth was changing the company's operating model from a family type to a corporate type with world-class standards. This move enabled us to establish clear corporate vision and principles, and to set up our strategy in order to reach our long-term goals. The process of building our corporate vision and how to get where we are today was crucial for us; we had many long discussions amongst the stake holders, formed a consensus and wrote down our every single decision we took on paper. We never stop pursuing our goals. We have reached the level of 80 percent of fulfillment of our vision, and our corporate governance and risk resistance have become much stronger than before.

### What is the company's main priority?

The main priority is to contribute constantly to the economic and social development of the country. Improving our customer-centered business model by offering various competitive services is also our foremost priority. We wish to become a "lifetime partner" to our customers.

### What differentiates Sardar Group from its competitors?

We are the official distributor of Toyota, Lexus, Jaguar, Land Rover, and Hino. We have all the technical information for the products. We are able to perform warranty and recall services, which are not available in Iraq. Recalls should be properly registered and followed by the importer under the control of government, the same as in many other countries. As there are no such laws and regulations in Iraq, we perform such responsibilities voluntarily and as a duty to our customers.

### What is your advice to the country's youth?

First, education is paramount. Finish your studies! Work in international companies to gain world-class experience and learn processes and procedures. Do not settle in what you do. Never give up on your goals. Every logical idea will surely take place one day.

### What is your motivation in life?

My motivation is the country, and how to contribute to the development of the country.



## Corporate Social Responsibility

### Sakura Park

Sardar Group opened Sakura Park, which has an area of 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>, in Erbil in 2016. The group has planted over 800 Japanese Sakura Trees in Iraq since 2016.



### Toyota Dream Car Art Contest

The Dream Car Art Contest is held around the world on national, regional and global levels to encourage and inspire creativity in children. Since 2004, over 100 countries have participated in the Dream Car Art Contest, with over 6.2 million pictures entered by children up to 15 years of age/ In 2018, 7-year-old Iraqi Mayar Faez's drawing, Farmer's Car for People with

Physical Impairments, was chosen as one of winners of Toyota Iraq's National Dream Car Contest. Her artwork, as well as the other winners' artworks from other countries, was sent to Japan to enter the global contest. Faez's drawing was named the winner of the "Toyoda Akio Award" (given to only one child per year), as well as the "Enthusiasm Award". Faez was presented with her two awards at the Global Award Ceremony held in Japan in August 2018.

### Mobile Medical Unit Project

Sardar Group participated alongside Sumitomo Corporation and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society to launch the Mobile Medical Unit Project in Iraq in 2018. The delivery of customized, heavy-duty 700 series Hino trucks will make it possible to provide basic medical care, pediatric care and regular pre-natal examinations at camps for internally displaced persons.

# 800+ Trees

**Sardar Group has planted over 800 Japanese Sakura Trees in Iraq since 2016.**

### UNDP Internally Displaced Persons Training Program

In 2016, Toyota Iraq signed an agreement with UNDP to provide vocational training in vehicle mechanics and maintenance to hundreds of internally displaced persons.

- 4 TOTO
- 5 Toyota Dream Car Art Contest
- 6 Sakura Park
- 7 UNDP Internally Displaced Persons Training Program

## The Snapshot

# 10 Things to know about Kurdistan's energy landscape

**The Kurdistan Region of Iraq focuses on increasing its oil output and developing its abundant gas resources.**



## 1. Revenue

It would be hard to ignore the importance of the energy industry in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KRI) economic development plans, given that the sector contributes over 85 percent of the revenues of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

The oil industry has led to a remarkable transformation of the KRI's economy since 2006. Today, however, the KRI finds itself in a more complex situation. A fall in oil prices means that oil production is no longer an easy path to explosive growth. While the KRG is working to diversify

its economy, developing sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture and tourism, oil will remain to be the primary economic driving force for the foreseeable future.

The KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources announced that the KRI has exported over 133 million barrels of oil that has generated \$7.7 billion in 2018, according to the latest data available.

## 2. Oil Reserves

So far, a total of 55 oil and gas fields have been discovered in the KRI. The MNR estimates that Kurdistan holds 45 billion barrels of unproven oil reserves, the 7th largest in the Middle East.

## 3. Oil Production & Exports

Since 2006 the KRI has more than doubled its oil production by opening up its markets to foreign investment. According to the latest data available, the KRI's crude oil production stood at around 492,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2019, up from around 417,000 bpd in 2018. The KRI produced around 10 percent of Iraq's total output of 4.62 million bpd in 2019.

While new discoveries of substantial oil reserves are regarded as unlikely in the near future, the KRG aims to increase its current production levels to 550,000 bpd in 2021.

## 4. Refineries

There are three refineries in the KRI, which have a combined installed capacity of 140,000 bpd as of 2020.

### Kalak Refinery

Located in Erbil Governorate  
Operated by KAR Group  
Capacity: 100,000 bpd

### Bazian Refinery

Located in Sulaymaniyah Governorate  
Operated by Qaiwan Group  
Capacity: 34,000 bpd

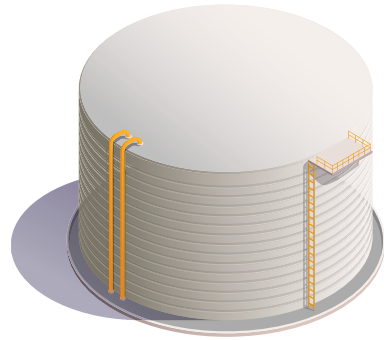
### Tawke Refinery

Located in Duhok Governorate  
Operated by DNO  
Capacity: 6,000 bpd

## Kurdistan Region of Iraq Oil Production



E



**Reserves of major gas fields in the KRI**  
(Gas proved + probable reserves + contingent resources)

- Khor Mor: 8.2 tcf
- Bina Bawi: 7.1 tcf
- Chemchemical: 4.4 tcf
- Miran: 6.6 tcf
- Khurmala: 3.46 tcf
- Khurdamir: 2.26 tcf
- Pulkhana: 1.8 tcf
- Topkhana: 1.6 tcf
- Shaikan: 0.9 tcf
- Pirmam: 0.88 tcf

**5. Gas reserves**

The KRI possesses around 27 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves. The KRG has been identified gas as a priority for long-term strategic development.

The development of the KRG’s gas reserves has the potential to become an engine of future economic growth. As such, the KRG’s economic development roadmap lays out plans to develop and capitalize on the region’s abundant natural gas resources. The utilization of gas will be crucial to meeting rising power demand in the KRI.

Energy experts are confident about the future of the region’s gas projects and the MNR’s commitment to boosting the output capacity of its gas fields. The first phase of the MNR’s plan is to develop Kurdistan’s gas resources to meet domestic demand. The second phase focuses on meeting the demand of southern Iraq and neighboring countries.

**Khor Mor produces at around 400m cubic feet per day (cfd). It is forecasted that output will be increased to 650m cfd in 2022, and then to 900m cfd by 2023.**



**6. Electricity sector**

The issue of unplanned power outages across the KRI needs to be addressed. Many businesses and homes have their own back-up power generators to maintain a stable supply. Currently, the KRG supplies around 17 hours electricity per day. However, the KRG’s Ministry of Electricity has plans to develop capacity in power generation, transmission, distribution and control.

**Average of Electricity provided daily**



**7. Electricity Consumers & Demand**

The number of electricity consumers increased from 705,000 in 2009 to 1,574,000 in 2020 in the KRI.

**Consumers**



Demand for electricity jumped from just 925 MW in 2004 to 6,500 MW in 2020. It is predicted that demand for electricity will grow at an annual rate of around 10% between 2020 and 2025.

**Demand**



**8. Power Generation Capacity**

Kurdistan’s power generation capacity is primarily managed by the private sector, which provides the bulk of Kurdistan’s electricity generating infrastructure. Generating capacity expanded to rise from 482 MW in 2007 to around 6,737 MW in 2020.

**Installed Capacity**



**9. Electricity sector investment**

Since 2004, over \$5 billion has been invested in electricity generation in the KRI.

The KRG is planning to invest another \$1.2 billion in the coming two years.

**10. Renewables**

Installed capacity for renewable energy sources in the KRI remains quite limited. KRG officials confirm that renewable energy plays a minor role in meeting the Kurdistan’s power needs at the moment, but also point to the important role that alternative sources of energy play in their strategic energy outlook. Currently, the KRI has five small hydro projects, which generate only 8% of the KRI’s total generation.

**Kurdistan’s first solar park**

Private sector solar projects have so far been limited to a few small-scale undertakings. The KRI’s first solar park will be established in Duhok in partnership with the UNDP and the Duhok Governorate. It is expected that the pilot solar project will provide a minimum of two megawatts of electricity within two years.

Q&amp;A

# Powering Kurdistan

*Muhammad Salih Khalil*  
Minister of Electricity

## Minister of Electricity Muhammad Salih Khalil on the projects that will boost the current electricity capacity, renewable energy vision, and the future investments in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



**We are planning to invest \$1.2 billion in the next two years. We would distribute these funds to four sectors: power generation, transmission, distribution and control.**

### How many power stations do you have, and what is the generation capacity in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)?

We have 14 substations, which generate power using different kinds of fuel: natural gas, HFO, diesel and hydro. Chamchamal, Bazian, Khurmala and Erbil power plants use natural gas. We also have a diesel-powered plant in Duhok. We have Baadre, which uses HFO. We have two hydro power plants: one in Dukan and one in Darbandikhan. A third facility is under implementation in Deralok.

We have currently a 6,737 megawatt (MW) installed capacity for generation. About 90% of our generation belongs to the private sector. Some of the output goes to factories, and the rest goes to the public sector and industrial areas. In total, about 65-70% of the power output goes to domestic use. We are also feeding Kirkuk 100MW and 350-400MW to Mosul as well.

What is the current total number of consumers and electricity demand?

The maximum demand is in winter, which goes up to 6,000MW.

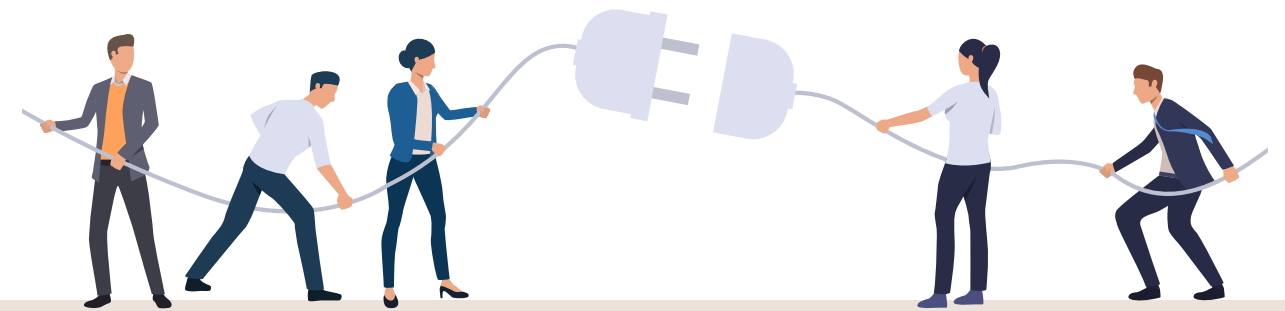
In summer, it is around 4,000-4,500MW. In spring and autumn, it is around 3,000-3,200MW. As of the end of October 2019, the number of consumers reached 1,574,000. We have supplied 17 hours and 8 minutes electricity per day in 2019.

### What are the projects that will boost the current electricity capacity?

We have three power plants that are still a simple cycle: Karshae in Duhok, Khurmala in Erbil and Bazian in Slemani. Using the existing fuel, we can generate 1,250 megawatts from these three locations. It means that the stored capacity would reach over 8,000MW. We plan to generate 500MW from each plant respectively from the simple cycle, compared to the combined cycle from Karshae and Khurmala. However, due to budgetary constraints, we have not been able to boost capacity.

### What are your current transmission projects?

We have 400KV voltage for transmission. Until now, we have focused on meeting this demand by building a 400 KV transmission



line between all the governorates in the KRI. Until now we only have 400KV in Erbil. We have a 400KV substation in Slemani, but there is no line to connect. In Duhok, we still do not have a line or a substation. It is important to install a 400KV line in order to reduce losses and transfer a large amount in MW between Erbil, Duhok, Slemani, and the rest of Iraq. We now have five interconnections with Iraq, in Kirkuk, Slemani, Mosul and Erbil. It is important to use a 400KV line because each 400 KV line can carry 1,000 megawatts. However, the existing transmission lines, which are 132 KV, can only carry 100 megawatts. One line would replace 10 existing lines. A 400KV line is urgently needed for our region.

### What are your distribution projects?

We now have smart meters for distribution. We experience significant losses in our system; 30-40% of our energy is lost annually. With the smart meter, which we started using in August 2019, about 55,000 meters have been installed. This project will help us reduce those losses. We are working on getting funding for a SCADA system, which is linked to the control. We do not have a control system in our region to see all this degeneration and what voltage is installed in each governorate. With the SCADA system live screen, it will be easy to see how much energy a governorate is using. That project will require at least 40 million dollars. We are trying hard to guarantee that budget.

### What are the projects in renewable energy?

For renewable energy, we have five small hydro projects. Our strategy is to focus on solar and hydro power. We have also surveyed our region for wind power. We conducted a feasibility study for five years. The results show that we only have wind in the winter. In other seasons, we did not get a positive result.

Only 8% of total generation comes from hydro. Gas is about 75%. Now, any new budget approved for generation will only be hydro or solar. There will not be any budget allocation for gas, HFO or diesel.

**For renewable energy, we have five small hydro projects. Our strategy is to focus on solar and hydro power. We have also surveyed our region for wind power. We conducted a feasibility study for five years.**

In the last two months, about six companies have submitted offers to generate from solar. Some of the companies have submitted BOO contracts instead of BOT contracts. We have established a committee to study their offers. I think that we will have a clear view of our decision by December 2019. We will seek the approval of the Council of Ministers because no contract is less than 10 years. In this case, I should get a green light from our government to sign a contract with a company.

### How much money has to be invested in the electricity sector in the upcoming year?

Due to existing budgetary constraints, what we are currently doing is only for emergency projects. We have gotten approval from the Council of Ministers once, for 15 million dollars. In November of this year, we also got approval for \$20.8 million: \$12.8 million for Zakho, \$3.5 million for Darbandikhan, and \$8 million for Soran.

In our strategic planning, we have reached stage seven. We are planning to invest \$1.2 billion in the next two years. We would distribute these funds to four sectors: power generation, transmission, distribution and control. We need to work on them in parallel. Otherwise, the electricity sector cannot be improved.



# QAIWAN GROUP

The Brand

## Quest of Growth

**Qaiwan Group is a major international group of companies based in Slemani and Dubai with a portfolio that includes oil refining, energy trading, power generation, real estate construction and development, and hospitality.**

Qaiwan is among the most active, influential and fast-growing companies in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The group has proved itself a trusted partner for some of the best-known international companies. Qaiwan secured a large loan for the power plant in collaboration with General Electric, Coface, and Deutsche Bank.

**“We are the largest international oil trading company from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Our Bazian oil refinery is one of only two in Kurdistan and is continuing to expand, and our development projects are unparalleled in Slemani and the wider Kurdistan Region of Iraq.”**

**Saad Hasan,  
CEO, Qaiwan Group**

**The most valuable asset and investment is our people. Currently, over %95 of Qaiwan’s employees are local.**

### Bazian Oil Refinery

Qaiwan’s Bazian oil refinery is currently processing 40,000 bpd. Qaiwan is planning to start the next phase of its expansion plans to further increase the refinery’s capacity. This expansion will add a capacity of 50,000 bpd of crude distillation, which will increase total capacity at the refinery to 90,000 bpd. The plan includes an expansion of all of the units at the refinery, including development of a new gasoline processing facility. Gasoline production facilities will include continuous catalyst reformer technology, the first of its kind in

the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. It will make the company’s gasoline unit the largest in the KRI. Total capital expenditure of this expansion will be over \$1 billion.

### Bazian Power Plant

Qaiwan Group’s Bazian gas-powered power plant has a capacity of 500MW, and supplies energy to the KRI as well as the rest of Iraq. The company intends to become a distributor as well in the long term.



# Qaiwan City

The development has 19 towers, 217 villas 1,260 residential units.



## Construction

Qaiwan Group is a developer for many construction projects around Slemani.

### Qaiwan City

Qaiwan City is one of the largest residential projects in Iraq. Home to several major real estate and development projects, the Qaiwan City project spans a land area of 45,000m<sup>2</sup>. The development has 19 towers, 217 villas, and 1,260 residential units.

### Qaiwan Towers

Qaiwan is also building the Qaiwan Towers project, worth \$100 million. The project is the largest of its kind in downtown Slemani, and includes a total of 95 commercial units, gym, pool, shops, and a wellness center.

## Sulaymaniyah Heights

Qaiwan Group's Sulaymaniyah Heights is a premium, luxury housing and commercial development project located in the Azmar Mountains overlooking Slemani. The project offers its residents the highest quality of housing, as well as a mall and commercial real estate. The development has 2,707 units, including villas and apartments. The project spans a land area of 1,587,500m<sup>2</sup>.

### Qaiwan Heights

Qaiwan Heights is one of the finest places to have a view of the Sulaimaniyah skyline. It is located on Goizha mountain in Slemani. The development will have 7,000 units upon completion.

**Qaiwan City is one of the largest residential projects in Iraq.**

## City Towers

City Tower project is another Qaiwan landmark project in Slemani. It was designed with perfection for residences with a better lifestyle in Slemani.

**City Tower project is another Qaiwan landmark project in Slemani.**

## Janaeen City

Janaeen City is one of the premium real-estate projects in Fallujah. It is built on 14,000m<sup>2</sup> with 401 villas suitable for five different types of modern living, suitable for all families.

## Retail

Qaiwan also has a retail division and has been the representative of Japan's Hitachi for 15 years.

## Education

Qaiwan's management believes strongly in the future of both the KRI and Iraq. Qaiwan contributes to human capital development in the KRI. The most valuable asset and investment is our people, says Mr. Saad Hassan. Currently, over 95 percent of Qaiwan's employees are local.



## Qaiwan International University

As part of its vision, Qaiwan Group has launched Qaiwan International University (QIU) in partnership with the internationally recognized University of Technology in Malaysia in 2018. The QIU offers courses in computing, business, and social sciences.

two kindergarten in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Maya has four British international schools, the first to follow a British curriculum with certified Cambridge education. Schools are located in Slemani and Kalar in the KRI.

## United Science Colleges

Qaiwan Group's United Science Colleges are a chain of 12 schools, 11 located in Slemani and one in Halabja. The instruction languages are English and Turkish.

## Maya Company

Maya company operates one of the largest local schools' networks with four schools, four institutes, and





The Brand

# RENWA GROUP

## %100

**Our market position is that we are 100% local.**

### How is Renwa currently positioned in the market?

Renwa is an energy services company. Its main area of activity is currently in oilfield services in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Our market position is that we are 100% local; however, we work only in sectors that require a high level of technical challenge and proficiency. We are one of very few local oilfield services providers who can work to the standards that international clients demand. We can and do compete with the global services giants on a local level. We are also diversifying into gas infrastructure and renewable energy.

### What are Renwa's technical and engineering capabilities and quality control standards?

We are a local company, but we would not have been able to get where we are today without help from more experienced expatriate personnel from outside. We are a rainbow nation at Renwa. Our team includes people of all sorts of backgrounds and ethnicities, and they have supported our local staff in getting up to speed through mentoring, training and knowledge sharing.

In engineering and mechanical construction, we work strictly to international codes. There are numerous codes and standards determined by the oil industry. We can only work for clients if we can demonstrate a complete knowledge, understanding and adherence to these codes. This affects the quality of everything that we do: they affect safety standards and our ability to provide a warranty to the client.

We are an ISO 9000 registered company, with a genuine international registration. Obviously, we have multiple QAQC systems, depending on which function you are looking at, whether it's designing and constructing tanks or a pipeline or engineering a facility.

### Some oil companies have left Kurdistan and sold their shares to other companies. Some have stayed but are merging with others. How should we read this in terms of the future of Kurdistan's energy industry?

Firstly, it's not unique to Kurdistan: around the world assets are disposed, restructured or merged regularly. At any given time, one of the major IOCs will be buying or selling assets somewhere. So that is a global pattern. Secondly, I think that you are going to see that we are in the midst of a period of consolidation in the KRI. You are beginning to see fewer of the small start-ups / wildcats -- they have either been bought, they have disposed of their assets or they have even had their assets taken by the KRG because they did not progress enough compared to

other better-resourced players. We are in a period where more and more companies are going from exploration into development and production. Then, once the majority of IOCs are producers, you will start to see some who are more successful on the production side than others taking over assets from those that have explored and developed. This is the natural process of consolidation borne of economies of scale.

**Our market position is that we are 100 percent local; however, we work only in sectors that require a high level of technical challenge and proficiency. We are one of very few local oilfield services providers who can work to the standards that international clients demand.**



**“We are one of very few local oilfield services providers who can work to the standards that international clients demand.”**

**Sirwan Sami Abdul Rahman**  
Chairman, Renwa Group

### How do you assess the gas potential of Kurdistan?

Some technical experts say that we are a gas field with oil pockets, which is an interesting viewpoint that has merit. Our gas fields are clearly potentially very substantial. However, the upside of oil compared to gas is that oil is a fungible product. Before it has even reached the surface, you have a market for it. It is easily stored and can be moved by truck or pipe. With gas it is more complex, but it is a cleaner energy, it's used more easily in power generation or large-scale utilities. Kurdistan will need to have large-scale gas infrastructure in place to truly exploit gas assets.

The gap at the moment is in building the gas infrastructure, which is an enormous responsibility for the KRG. The IOCs will be obliged to build gas infrastructure in their respective fields/blocks; however, the greater burden will fall on the KRG as much of the gas infrastructure that needs to be built will fall outside the IOCs' remit. It represents a substantial obligation, but also an exciting opportunity. We at Renwa very much want to be involved in that.

**So, seeking to diversify from being solely an oilfield services company to being a gas infrastructure company, we are in negotiations with international investors and partners in order to be able to present a plan to the relevant authorities here to support building gas infrastructure. It could certainly be a game-changer for Kurdistan in terms of economy, employment and trade. It will take many decades to build a full, robust gas infrastructure that will create opportunities for many citizens.**

### How do you assess Kurdistan's renewable energy potential? Do you think that in the near future we are going to see some new companies that will invest in renewable energy in Kurdistan?

I have been following and tracking renewable energy for decades. I find it personally very interesting. Every time I have thought that it remains out of reach, is too expensive in comparison to hydrocarbons, I am surprised by how quickly the price drops. The unit cost of solar is dropping at an exponential rate. It is startling and very encouraging. Every year they are able to shave more and more off the cost of producing units of energy. In the last five years, the renewables industry has lowered costs by a huge factor. This has reached the point where some Western developed countries are removing subsidies for having solar panels on your roof, because they almost match what hydrocarbon power generates.



I also have full faith in the renewables industry's place in Kurdistan because I find people sometimes belittle it here. Often, they feel that our citizenry does not understand the benefits of renewables. I reject that completely; I do know many people who are exhausted by the sound of domestic generators next to their homes and who want to preserve the beauty of the landscape of Kurdistan and are mindful of environmental damage.

I have full faith that renewables will continue, with the advance of technology, to come down in price. I also have full faith in the renewables industry's place in Kurdistan because I find people sometimes belittle it here. Often, they feel that our citizenry does not understand the benefits of renewables. I reject that completely; I do know many people who are exhausted by the sound of domestic generators next to their homes and who want to preserve the beauty of the landscape of Kurdistan and are mindful of environmental damage. I believe that the citizens of Kurdistan do want it to happen and public demand will be

the driver. That creates public will, and this should lead to political will. Not every solution requires government funding. There is a whole world of regulation, external funding and political drive towards renewables. So the KRG can provide support in non-financial ways by setting up a pro-renewables regulatory environment, by easing the path for land acquisition, by providing tax breaks and incentives, for example. No developed Western government is fully funding solar farms; they leave it to the private sector. However, they create the regulatory environment to make it favourable to do so.

We need to create a lobby that presents the case, that explains that for Renwa to match dollar for dollar or come close to parity with hydrocarbons, what conditions would need to be in place. And there is plenty of outside help. I don't think international funding bodies are going to come and fund oil and gas activities in Kurdistan -- I am talking about IMF, World Bank -- these people, if you explain what you want to do in renewables, may be able to help in some way. There are different ways to approach it. Not every solution requires the KRG to put its hands in its pockets.

**So, you are saying, Kurdistan needs a legal/regulatory environment that mandates a certain percentage of energy from renewable sources. Is it possible to move forward without such a law?**

Various MPs here in Kurdistan have discussed drafting laws that would be beneficial to creating a more mixed energy balance. It begins with a legislative process of course. Investors will not take steps without a clear understanding of the sector's regulatory and legal framework. If the Parliament cannot lead on this, then the KRG can take the lead and Parliament will follow, but I see no reason why we cannot take bold positive steps into renewables.

**I think that there should be oil and gas training academies throughout Kurdistan. The industry should be deeply involved in coming up with the curriculum and in driving the right sort of standards and educators to these institutes.**



### How do you assess Kurdistan's human capital in the energy industry?

Renwa is now in its tenth year of operation, and I can say the situation is better than it was but there still remains a long way to go. Many of our graduates who have studied anything related to what we do, whether it's petroleum engineering or mechanical engineering, have been given an old theoretical curriculum to follow that bears insufficient relation to the modern working world, standards or practices. That needs to improve. We are also finding that graduates may have an education, they have got decent grades in various functions in engineering, for example, but they are not work-ready. They haven't been trained in what it is to work collaboratively, to understand processes. That needs to be addressed. I think that there should be oil and gas training academies throughout Kurdistan. The industry should be deeply involved in coming up with the curriculum and in driving the right sort of standards and educators to these institutes.

### How important is it for Renwa to invest in employing more of a local workforce?

Wherever possible, we will replace an expatriate employee with a local one, and when that's not possible we will have an expatriate employee shadowed by a local, so in time what we would like is for more and more of our senior positions to be occupied by locals. However, one of the

problems we have is that many of the certifying bodies -- suppose you want to be a Quality Control engineer in oil and gas -- require you to pass various short exams to obtain certification. There is nowhere here for a Kurd to pass that exam -- there is no institute, there is nowhere to study that properly. This is one of the issues we have had, and it is something for the energy industry here to address.

I think we should be careful not to alienate the wonderful foreign staff who work in Kurdistan for the whole industry. They have mentored many of us, they have raised the standards and shown us the way. I think whatever localisation level we reach, we should always ensure that there is a good balance of external expertise contributing to whatever we have.

### What trends do you see in youth employment in Kurdistan?

I am beginning to see the emergence of a youth sector which, given the opportunity, would prefer to work in the private sector and not in the public sector. There has been for years now, but especially with this new government, a big effort to push people away from a reliance on the public sector. What we're now beginning to see, but it needs to grow exponentially, is a tendency of young men and women with no interest in just being on the government payroll. They feel they want to be architects, or chefs, or own their own stores, or be engineers, or run a company. Of course, we need a large number of

our brightest to work for the government. That said, the biggest solution to the government's problems would be to enable and empower the private sector. We need to create conditions where not only do people want to be in the private sector, but they understand the responsibility they hold and what's expected of them. We have employed people who haven't necessarily had the best education, and we educate them through work and motivate them through quick progress. Now they are exceptional permanent employees.

### How do you think that regional political problems are affecting Kurdistan's business landscape?

Everyone is affected by the events in the region. One thing you will find is that Kurds of Iraq crave peace and stability, and they will do everything possible to maintain it.

### My motto has always been: "The single best way to market Kurdistan is to bring people to see it for themselves."

Nobody is unimpressed. People genuinely enjoy being here. People choose to live here. We have employed foreigners on a short-term basis, and they have decided to stay for years. The single best way you could promote Kurdistan is through continuing to diversify. Diversification will give us strength, with no over-dependence on a single sector and reliance on people's will and desire to maintain peace and progress.



### As a Kurdish person who lived many years elsewhere, how would you define the Kurdish culture and the local people here?

We are a genuinely welcoming and tolerant people. We are a predominantly traditional people, but are completely accepting of other people who live different lives, and allow others to be who they are. We Kurdistanis are a rainbow nation. We have Christians, Arabs, Syrians, Yazidis, Kakais and so many more. This is the way to sustain peace and acceptance and tolerance. We have had 1.3 million refugees and IDPs enter Kurdistan. You will almost never hear about resentment from the public about it; it's part of our culture. Everyone here has a story of loss or tragedy. Here, people are forward-looking, peaceful, and desire progress.

### Considering Kurdistan's development since 2007, could you ever have dreamed this?

Now, yes, but if you had asked me in 2004, I would have struggled to believe that this is where we would be now. I've become accustomed now to progress. I must say, when I first moved back in 2004, I saw many shortcomings like the standard of buildings, or the quality of IT or Internet infrastructure, and I thought, this will never happen, they don't see the need. Then at each stage I have seen someone get up and fulfil that need. We are an entrepreneurial people. People see gaps, and they see an opportunity to fill that gap and make a good living, and that is very commendable.

The Focus

# Kurdistan Going Digital



The most significant development in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) will take place in digital transformation in the coming years. The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) vision for digitalization will transform all aspects of business and society in the KRI.

The Department of IT (DIT), the main body for the KRG's digital transformation, is tasked with establishing the digital infrastructure of the government institutions and to optimize the administration of public services. The DIT's

primary mandate is to accelerate digitization in Kurdistan and move the region closer to becoming a digital nation, society, and economy. To ensure its success, the KRG has elevated the status of the DIT, which now reports directly to the Prime Minister's office.

**The KRG has placed digital transformation at the core of its long-term development strategy with the aim of making government more efficient, transparent, and accountable.**

**The DIT's primary mandate is to transform the government to be citizen centric by the means of digital technologies.**

The DIT is focusing on increasing the number of digital services used and delivered by the government to citizens and their integration, enabling government agencies to use shared IT platforms such as data centers, and building standards and practices to deploy IT in the government.

The KRG's digital transformation strategy is based on three core principles:

1. **Customer-centric:** Citizens and employees are both customers of government digital services. DIT will consult to understand their needs and deliver services accessible through a range of devices.
2. **Shared Platform:** A shared platform approach will reduce costs, safeguard data, and enhance the availability and consistency of services. DIT's digital transformation strategy will be planned centrally and delivered across ministries, ensuring cost efficiency and a consistent outcome.
3. **Security and Privacy:** Government's digital infrastructure and services will be designed with high security built-in. This will ensure that citizens and their data are safe.

## Data Center

DIT is working on establishing the first T3 data center of the Kurdistan Regional Government making the consolidation of government digital data and services possible and enable enterprise application sharing across government agencies. The data center is planned to be online in May 2020.

The DIT aims to create efficiency in administration by automating key functions and using common ICT infrastructure across all government bodies.



**The DIT is also working on creating a digital identity for every resident of the KRI to enable digital service authentication and delivery.**

Hiwa Afandi,  
Head of the Department of Information Technology



**Digital Identity**

A major focus of the DIT is the digital identity for every citizen and resident of the KRI. Following the successful implementation of KRG's biometric registration program in the past, DIT's approach is planned to be multi phased involving relevant stake holders such as Ministries of Interior, Planning as well as Finance. The digital identity project is planned to be implemented in phases starting at the end of 2020.

**Digital Services**

DIT will also transform government behind the scenes, centralizing systems from payroll to human resources, ensuring that our civil servants can work efficiently and are accountable for their work.

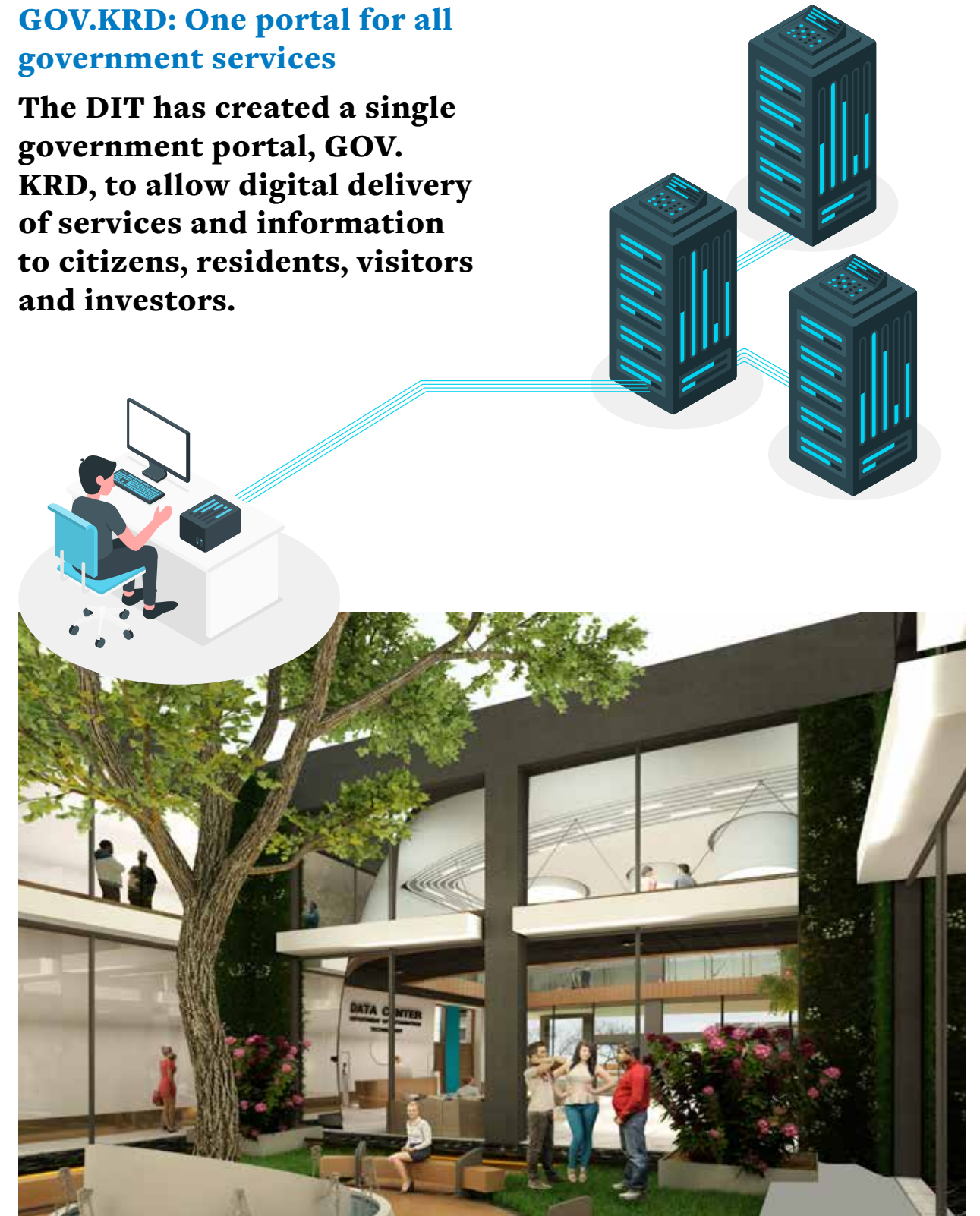
The KRG's e-government strategy outlines a vision of embracing technology to create a more efficient, effective, accessible, and transparent government that meets the needs of individuals and business.

In order to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of government services, the DIT aims to bring the following digital services in 2020 online:

1. Tax system
2. E-notary system
3. E-land registry system
4. Company registration system

**GOV.KRD: One portal for all government services**

The DIT has created a single government portal, GOV.KRD, to allow digital delivery of services and information to citizens, residents, visitors and investors.



The Survey

# Digital Profile of the KRI 2020

Digital technologies play an important part in the everyday life of youth in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The purpose of this survey is to present findings regarding use of digital technologies among younger generations.

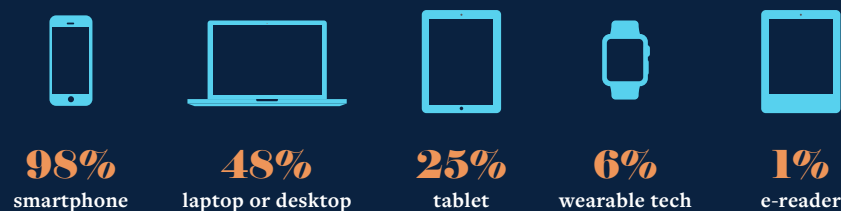


## Mobile Activity

We asked survey participants about how they get online. While they use a range of digital devices, they mostly use smartphones and laptops to connect.

### Device usage

(percent that uses each kind of device)



## Social Media

The youth in the KRI is highly engaged in social networking, video sharing and messaging applications. When asked which they use most often, **94%** said Instagram.

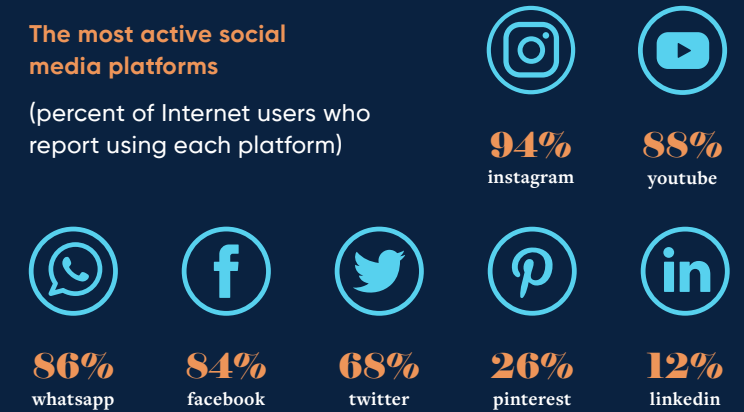
The remaining responses (**5%**) either spend 2 hours per day or less, or were unsure about how much time they spend online.

Using social media or messaging service: **99%**

Actively engaged with social media: **91%**

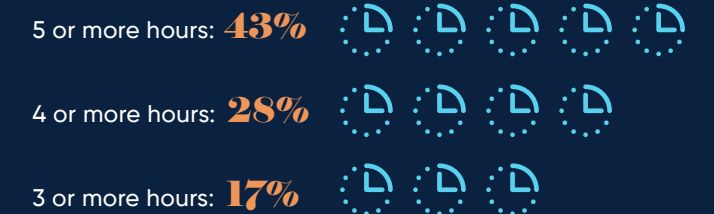
### The most active social media platforms

(percent of Internet users who report using each platform)



### Time spent

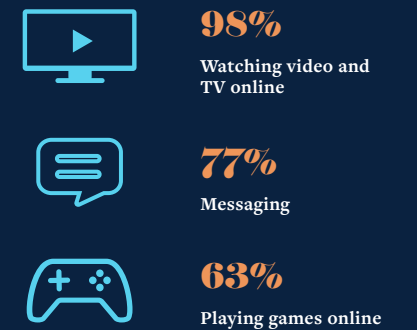
(average amount of time spent per day using social media)



## The Content

Youth in the KRI goes online for entertainment (video streaming or playing games, for example), socializing with others, searching for information about hobbies and interests, and news.

Other activities included posting on social media profiles (**85%**), commenting on other people's social media posts (**67%**), and live streaming (**12%**).



## Affinity with digital technologies

We also asked participants about their level of affinity with digital technology.

**65%** responded they would be "devastated" if they could not use any digital technology for a month.

**24%** would feel "annoyed but would get used to it".

**11%** of respondents said they would miss digital technology "quite a lot".

### About the research

Data for this study was collected through a face-to-face and phone survey conducted in the fourth quarter of the 2019. A total of 280 young people from the KRI, aged between 18 and 23, completed the three-minute questionnaire.

## The Snapshot

## ICT

**Iraqi Kurdistan's ICT sector started from almost nothing in 2008, and has since become one of Kurdistan's most well-developed sectors.**

## Subscribers for the major companies (Iraq)

Source: GSMA Intelligence



01

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is fully behind ICT's continued growth, an indication of the importance of this industry to Kurdistan's future economic development plans. The KRG is committed to bringing best practices to the implementation of ICT in government services. The public sector is quickly developing its own hardware to make the KRG work more effectively and efficiently.

02

The ICT sector has witnessed continuous growth in recent years, with the number of young people working in the sector increasing. The ICT industry has the potential to become one of the drivers of employment in Kurdistan in the long term.

03

The provision of Internet services in the KRI started from a low baseline- the first international cables to bring data in and out of the KRI were only established in 2008. Since then, distribution and penetration have grown quickly. In addition, service and pricing for international data have greatly improved in the KRI in the last decade.

04

Internet penetration rates have been climbing steeply, with major growth in local Internet service providers. There were 335,740 subscribers in the KRI in 2010. This number had increased to over 3 million in 2020.

05

Currently, three major telecom companies are licensed to provide Internet services nationwide (Zain Iraq, Asiacell, and Korek Telecom). In addition, while there were only 26 ISPs in the KRI in 2010, there are over 60 companies that have been licensed by the KRG's Ministry of Transportation and Communications to provide data services as of 2020.

06

While major mobile operators provide 3G Internet to smartphone users, the use of the latest technologies in wireless data transmission, including 4G, is also available to computer users in the KRI. Mobile penetration rates, already relatively high at over 94% within the KRI, are continuing to rise.

07

The young demographics of the KRI (median age being 20) suggest that there are long-term growth prospects in the sector. The younger generation is increasingly present on the Internet, particularly in social media. Demand for ICT services will therefore continue to grow in terms of speed, cost, capacity and Internet quality. Moreover, companies outside of the ICT sector will be increasingly reliant on social media use for public outreach and advertising.

08

The ongoing growth of the ICT sector in Kurdistan depends on a regulatory environment, which is essential for the growth of the sector. It is forecasted that the mobile industry's contribution to the Kurdish economy will continue to increase. If the KRG can create a fair regulatory environment, the Region will promote innovation enabled by IT & Telecoms technologies and services.

The Snapshot: Construction

# Gearred to Build

**Construction, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's most rapidly developing sector, has seen important advancements in both quality and capacity over the last decade. Now, new laws and projects are set to increase strength and competitiveness.**

## 01

### Government Initiatives

The KRI has been experiencing an infrastructure boom that is reshaping its future. The KRI's commitment to boosting infrastructure development will transform the region's economic landscape. Transportation networks, silos, electricity lines, and water pipelines have been prioritized for infrastructure investment, and the regional government is directing significant levels of funding towards these projects. The allocation of \$420 million for infrastructure development was announced in 2020.

**\$420 million**

to be invested in  
infrastructure projects

Bridges, new roads  
Expanded highways  
Water and electricity network

## 02

### Investment

As a central driver of the growth in foreign and domestic investment in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), housing has drawn a huge amount of resources to the KRI. Some \$16.5 billion in Board of Investment-licensed housing projects (not including commercial or industrial space) have been invested alone since 2006.

**\$16,5 billion** 

in Board of Investment-licensed  
housing projects

## 03

### Commercial and Residential Projects

The construction industry has developed dynamically, spanning the residential, commercial, and retail segments. High-profile commercial projects are coming together quickly, while ongoing, large-scale residential developments are set to greatly expand supply in the years to come. Trends that have gained steam recently and will persist in coming years include a move towards increasingly high-quality builds, as well as the standardization and enforcement of construction and development standards.







The Brand

# THE BOULEVARD

## A New Face of Real Estate in Kurdistan

**Bawar Saeed on 4 Bridges' unique "The Boulevard" project, the company's vision and goals for a prosperous Kurdistan.**

### What is the vision behind "The Boulevard" project?

The overthrow of the Baathist Regime in 2003 and enactment of Kurdistan Investment Law in 2006 by the Kurdistan Parliament ushered in years of unmatched prosperity and remarkable developments for the people of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The attractive and business-friendly Investment Law paved the way for local and foreign investors to explore abundant business opportunities, embarking on a new era of development.

**We are confident that "The Boulevard" will introduce a new face of real estate in Kurdistan. Unlike existing housing projects, we are committed to building apartments in which the highest-quality amenities and an inspiring lifestyle will be found.**

**Bawar Saeed, CEO, 4 Bridges**

As different aspects of society progress, the standard of living and individuals' preferences and demands change with it. The increase in local population and flow of foreigners to the KRI led to increased demand for housing and real estate projects. In the past few years, the real estate sector in the KRI has improved considerably and contributed to the development of the Region's economy.

As part of this improvement, we have decided to leave our mark in this sector with the aim of taking it to another level. We are confident that "The Boulevard" will introduce a new face of real estate in Kurdistan. Unlike existing housing projects, we are committed to building apartments in which the highest-quality amenities and an inspiring lifestyle will be found.

### What distinguishes "The Boulevard" from other projects in the KRI?

What distinguishes us is our unwavering commitment to building high-quality housing. Our vision for this project is customer-driven, focused on offering top-quality housing and services rather than maximizing benefit.

In the beginning of our project, we conducted intensive market research with third parties on two fronts. First, we analyzed the needs and expectations of the people. Second, we studied the strengths and weaknesses of other similar projects, in order to address the weaknesses and build on the strengths.

Some of our distinguishing features are as follows: Using high quality materials for finishing, having a rooftop pool & rooftop gym for the first time in Kurdistan and Iraq, cinema, retail as well as coffee and beverage shops, optimum safety and our project is earthquake-resistant up to 7.8 degree. We have separated small (Studios and 1+1) apartments from the bigger units of (2+1, 3+1 and 4+1) in a sense that small apartments are in different blocks than the big apartments. This will give more privacy and comfort to the families that are interested in big units, as well as expats and singles targeting small units. Different lifestyles need different considerations.



### How is the project progressing, and when do you expect “The Boulevard” to be completed?

It will be built and sold in one phase. Excavation is finished, and the structure is under construction. However, like the rest of the world, currently we are adjusting to the COVID-19 pandemic. We plan on kicking off construction as soon as it's safe for our employees and workers to return to work. We aim to finish the whole project in three years.

### In terms of quality standards, what types of partnerships do you establish with international companies?

The Boulevard abides by international standards in terms of quality and safety, not only for construction, but also for ensuring the safety of our engineers and employees. Our project is designed by a world-class international company with decades of experience in designing major projects around the world. All of our designs are reviewed by a third party that is also well-known internationally and has a very good reputation.

Aside from the design stages, the construction phase will be fully implemented by our staff, consisting of experienced local and international members, following American safety standards. The whole construction phase is also supervised by a distinguished international construction-supervision company.

### How do you assess the project's contribution to Kurdistan's vision of creating a destination for business and tourism?

The Boulevard will indeed have a significant contribution to Kurdistan's economy as well as the tourism sector. We have considered many entertainment projects for the residents as well as the tourists visiting the city.

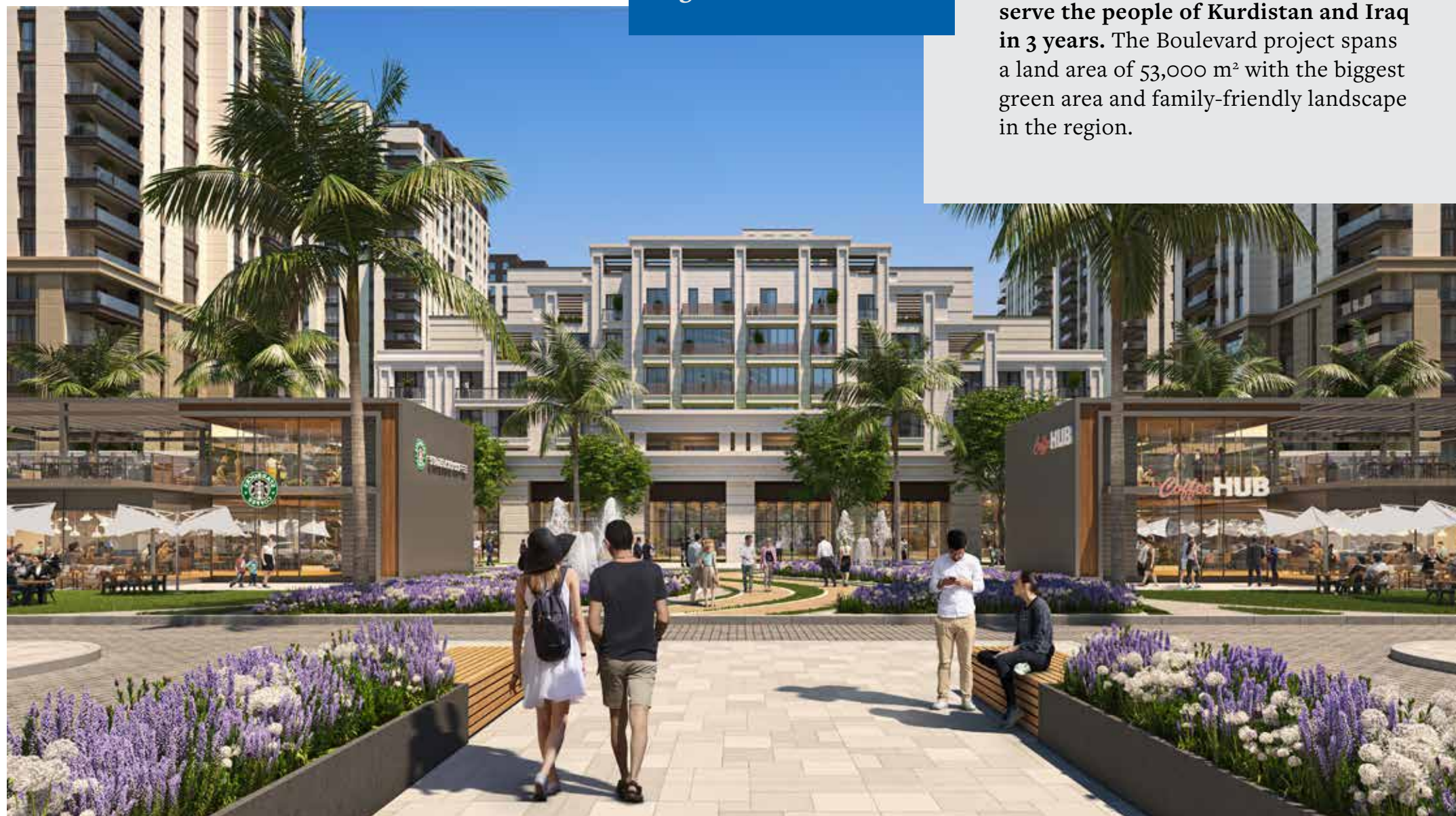
We are building a world-class project where you will have access to many global retail brands, international restaurants, coffee shops, cinemas as well as rooftop pools with a rooftop vitamin bar. The construction phase will create around 1,000 job opportunities. Upon completion of the construction, hundreds of job opportunities will be available to maintain the project.

**Our project is designed by a world-class international company with decades of experience in designing major projects around the world.**

**The Boulevard project spans a land area of 53,000m<sup>2</sup> with the biggest green area and family-friendly landscape in the region.**

## The Boulevard Project

The Boulevard is located on one of the prime locations of the city planned to serve the people of Kurdistan and Iraq in 3 years. The Boulevard project spans a land area of 53,000 m<sup>2</sup> with the biggest green area and family-friendly landscape in the region.







**The project consists of 10 towers of 12 floors each, of around 1,000 units, from Studios to Penthouses.**

**It will be built with a high-end, contemporary and warm design.**

The project is mainly residential with commercial areas and offices. It is going to be the first residential complex in the city to have its commercial areas integrated with its residential units in a way that attracts families, expats and individuals. We will ensure that the people living in the complex feel some sense of privacy as well as upscale lifestyle.



**The project will have the first-ever rooftop pool in Kurdistan and Iraq.**





## Special Amenities

In addition to basic services such as water, electricity, drainage systems, telecom services, and Internet, residents will enjoy exclusive benefits and services:

- Security surveillance system across the entire complex.
- Automatic fire alarm system.
- Emergency exit stairs.
- Underground parking spaces with direct interior access.
- Spacious visitors' parking.
- 24-hour maintenance and cleaning services.
- Advanced energy-saving heating and cooling system.
- Specific repository areas for garbage disposal.
- Service Facilities (Medical Clinic, Fire Station, Kindergarten, Mosque).

## Building Features

The towers are designed using the latest and most contemporary architectural advances that reflect the region's environment and climate.

- Walls and conductors constructed using heat and moisture insulating materials.
- Windows with double-pane glass to maximize insulation from the heat, protecting the building from fluctuations in temperature that occur between seasons.
- High-speed elevators for residents, in addition to special service elevators.
- Finest wood-lined interior doors.
- Luxury-brand sanitary ware.
- Kitchens equipped with stained-wood cupboards and high-tech exhaust fans.

The Snapshot: Agriculture

# Discover the Potential



**The unique topography of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq makes it ideally suited to the development of a robust agricultural industry.**

Since Kurdistan's economy is primarily driven by the oil industry, the agriculture sector has been largely separated from the wider economy. However, there is a growing consensus in the KRG that it is time for a new approach to invest in the fertile land with which the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is blessed. Therefore, the Kurdish government aims to put agriculture once more at the top of the economic agenda.

### The Potential

Kurdistan sits on some of the most fertile soil in the Middle East. Its relatively varied climate allows for a wide range of crops to be cultivated, many of which are in great demand regionally. During the 1960s and 1970s, Kurdistan's diverse and export-orientated agricultural

sector was renowned across the region. However, continued instability, conflicts, and lack of investment have negatively impacted the sector and reduced its appeal to potential investors. If Kurdistan once again makes the industry a priority, it will surely benefit from regaining its status as an agricultural powerhouse.

**The world's first agricultural community was formed around BC 10,000 in what is today the Chamchamal area in Slemani Province.**

### Food Security

Despite the fact that it has the potential to become self-sufficient in food production, Kurdistan's food industry is overly reliant on imports. The KRI's growing population saw food demand grow by 20% between 2007 and 2017, and growth is forecast to reach 6% per year in the next five years. Therefore, the KRG aims to make agriculture a priority once more, ensuring greater food security for the KRI.

### Employment

In light of its huge potential, the KRG is keen to build strong agricultural infrastructure to make the sector a significant source of employment and contributor to the Kurdish Region of Iraq's (KRI's) non-oil economy. It is estimated that agriculture provides direct employment to around 6% of the population. If the KRG provides the necessary support and funding, agriculture has the potential to provide around 10% of its employment.

### Investment Projects

The Kurdistan Board of Investment statistics indicate that 30 agricultural investment projects worth over \$834 million have been undertaken in the KRI from 2006 to 2019. Agriculture projects in the Erbil Governorate has

received the largest amount of allocated land compared to Slemani and Duhok. However, in terms of investment capital by governorate, Duhok leads the way, having increased its share to around 60% of all local agriculture investment. The government announced the construction of the Food Industrial Zone in Duhok in July 2020.

**The zone is expected to host over 250 food processing facilities. The Kurdistan Investment Board and Ministry of Agriculture have also announced that they have been working on over 100 agricultural projects to boost the sector across the KRI.**

### Production

Kurdistan's harvest is dominated by wheat, barley, potatoes, and tomatoes. Wheat and barley combined constitute a significant percentage of all agricultural production. Potato production increased by 153% over the previous decade. Vegetable cultivation increased by 93%, coming within reach of meeting domestic demand.



### Wheat

Wheat remains one of the biggest crops in the KRI. The area of land used for wheat cultivation has increased by 80% in the last decade, and the KRI's wheat production now stands around 1 million tons. The KRG has prioritized the construction of new wheat silos, which will increase storage capacity from 385,000 tons to 1 million tons.



### Pomegranates

Pomegranates constitute one of the most commercially important fruit crops of the KRI. Halabja is particularly known for its high-quality pomegranates. Pomegranate production has increased rapidly in the last decade. Kurdistan's total pomegranate production has increased to 29,338 tons in 2018, from 9,708 tons in 2008.



### Eggs

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq's total egg production has increased to 1.3 billion in 2018, from 247 million in 2012.

Q&amp;A

# Planting the Seeds

*Begard Talabani*

Minister of Agriculture & Water Resources

## Minister Begard Talabani on the agricultural potential of Kurdistan, and the opportunities for foreign players in Kurdistan's agriculture industry.



**We want to go from the current agricultural system to a precision one. We plan to introduce high-quality inputs to every segment. We will also increase the technical capabilities of our farmers to enable them to produce better quality output that we can then export.**

### **How would you define the agricultural potential of the Kurdistan Region Iraq (KRI)?**

Kurdistan has significant untapped agricultural potential that needs to be explored before it can be fulfilled. The KRI has many advantages in terms of fertile land, suitable climate, and water resources that allow us to produce high-quality products throughout the year. Considering its potential, the agriculture industry will bring many advantages to our economy and could become a leading source of income for the KRI in the long term. Therefore, I believe Kurdistan's agriculture industry is as important as its oil and gas industry, given our objective of sustainable economic development.

### **What policy priorities will boost the KRI's agriculture sector?**

We have entered a new stage of agricultural reform. In an effort to deepen this reform and expand agricultural production, the regional government has named agriculture as one of the most important sectors in its economic diversification plans for the coming four years. Today Kurdistan is dependent on agricultural imports, but our aim is to change this. Food security has been placed at the top of our agenda and we aim to achieve self-sufficiency in the long run.

We want to go from the current agricultural system to a precision one. We plan to introduce high-quality inputs to every segment. We will also increase the technical capabilities of our farmers to enable them to produce better quality output that we can then export. The main objectives are to increase production to support food self-



**I believe Kurdistan's agriculture industry is as important as its oil and gas industry, given our objective of sustainable economic development.**

sufficiency and boost exports, while creating jobs and contributing to the development of remote rural areas.

### **What are the opportunities for foreign players in the KRI's agriculture industry?**

Modernizing the agriculture sector and promoting private investment are also two of our priorities. We plan to create public-private partnerships to increase our production and improve the quality of our agricultural products. To reach the goal improving productivity, we are teaming up with researchers from foreign countries and we are open to collaboration with international organizations that can help us improve our agriculture sector.





The Snapshot

# Erbil International Airport



## EIA at a glance

Total number of passengers:

**1,533,863**

Total cargo tonnage:

**16,505 tons**

Average commercial flights per day:

**52**

Airports connected to EIA:

**32**

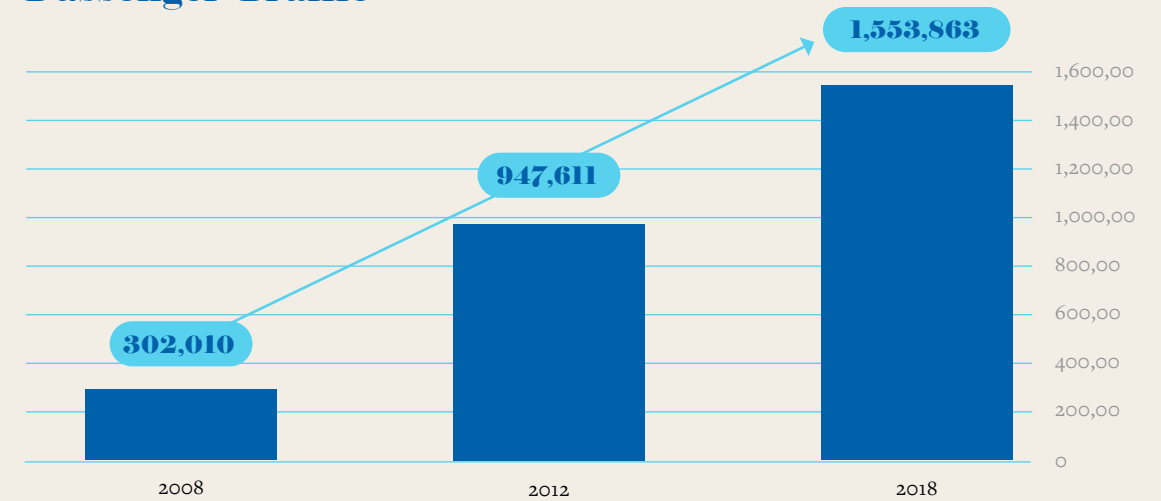
Total airlines flying to EIA:

**21**

**For many foreigners arriving in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Erbil International Airport (EIA) provides the first glimpse of an increasingly modern and prosperous Iraqi Kurdistan.**

**Erbil's well-run, clean, and effectively designed airport opened as a civilian airport as recently as 2006 and was renovated in 2010.**

## EIA Passenger Traffic



Strong international links are essential for any successful city to drive its economy. Today, EIA connects Erbil with 32 destinations through 21 airlines and is continuing to expand its reach.

The early successes of EIA have come to be recognized internationally, and in 2013 the airport was named 'Best Emerging Airport' with fewer than five million passengers per annum, by an international jury at the Emerging Market Airport Show in Dubai.

EIA has capacity for 3 million passengers annually. It also has one of the longest runways in the world, which allows large cargo aircraft to land successfully.

The EIA provides free internet and is expanding its duty-free offerings to optimize the quality and comfort of passengers' experiences.

Giving travelers a distinctly Kurdish welcome, the EIA has become a stronghold of efficiency that promotes a national brand and is keeping Kurdistan connected.

The Brand

# MACAIR FLIGHT SUPPORT

**Committed to a Higher  
Standard of Excellence**

Macair Flight Support's CEO Dori Abouzeid is a commercial pilot with over 15,000 hours of experience flying everything from small aircraft to Boeing jets, as well as being an FAA-licensed airframe and power plant technician, who aims to apply his personal exposure to the global aviation business into innovating the private aircraft industry in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

## How would you summarize the company's overall performance in recent years?

We have experienced slow but steady growth despite the geopolitical and economic challenges facing the whole region. We continue to build on our core values of high ethics and standards, which has allowed us to offer Erbil International Airport the best possible aircraft handling services.

## How would you assess the future of the private aviation industry in the KRI?

The adage that 'time is money' still holds true. We had to educate the public on the use of private jets in the 90s in the US. We feel that the Middle East region still believes that private and general aviation is for the rich and famous. But this is not always true. Middle managers and corporations can use aviation to save time and money, while also providing the quality of life that comes from being able to travel from Erbil to Dubai or Istanbul and still be home in time for dinner. We see awareness of the benefits of private air travel in the KRI growing slowly but steadily.

## What were the main contributors to the company's performance?

Our team. We are proud to employ the very best, and we provide training and build synergy until the whole team operates as one. We feel that with our team we will continue our growth well into the future. The motto that we live by is a quote from Aristotle: "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then becomes a habit, not an act".

## What role is the company playing during the Covid-19 pandemic?

We implemented rules and made major changes to our daily service provision well before the international regulations took place. We started sanitizing luggage, aircraft, offices, and vehicles, and immediately imported personal protective equipment for our staff well before other international operators.

## 01. FBO and Flight Support

As the only VIP aircraft flight support provider in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Macair Flight Support delivers unrivalled aviation assistance.



## 02. Aircraft Management

Owning a corporate aircraft represents a significant capital investment that requires careful and expertly choreographed management. Macair Flight Support conducts on-demand air charter services worldwide.

## 03. Aircraft Charters and Medevac

Macair Flight Support offers worldwide aircraft charters and brokerages with the highest standards of excellence. Whether a light, mid-size, large-cabin jet or turboprop, the company delivers the right airplane and the right service.



## 04. Sales and Acquisitions

Macair Flight Support offers full aircraft brokerage, acquisition, and disposition services to aircraft owners and other entities interested in buying new or selling existing aircraft. The company is an industry leader with years of experience and have long-standing relationships with all types of aviation professionals, including aircraft owners, brokers, buyers, and sellers.

## 05. Concierge Services

From in-flight amenities to on-ground accommodations, Macair's attentive and multilingual staff can procure even the most niche requests.



## 06. Aircraft Detailing

Macair Flight Support offers aircraft cleaning and detailing of interiors, exteriors, lavatories, and washing services to Erbil International Airport.

T: +964 750 386 2363  
[www.macairflightsupport.com](http://www.macairflightsupport.com)

The Snapshot

## 03

Chapter three:  
**Tourism**



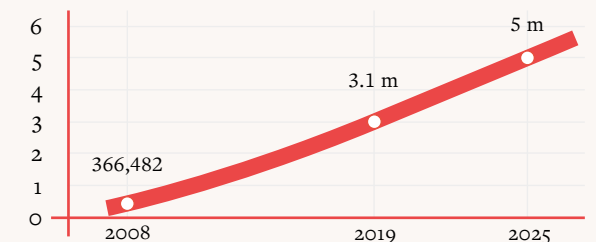
**Considering its range of attractions, historic places, archeological sites, and untouched natural beauty, Kurdistan has huge potential to brand itself as a tourism destination.**

***Hike to the Top,  
Visit Archeological  
Sites, Walk  
through the World's  
Longest-Inhabited  
City***

**The Kurdistan Region of Iraq, with a diversity of landscapes, culture and heritage, looks to raise its profile as an adventure and archeological tourism destination.**

The tourism industry has great potential to become an important contributor to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KRI) economic growth and is also important a means of diversifying the KRI's economy away from reliance on energy exports.

The tourism sector softened slightly between 2015 and 2017, when regional problems led to an economic slowdown in the KRI, but it has rebounded well in subsequent years. According to the KRG's Ministry of Tourism, 2019 was a record-breaking year. Visitor arrivals rose to around 3.1 million. The KRI expects to attract nearly 5 million visitors by 2025. While internal tourism remains Kurdistan's largest market, Turkey, Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, and the European countries formed the largest foreign markets.



***Visitors in years***

The number of annual visitors has grown every year over the last decade from 377,482 in 2008 to 3.1 million in 2019. This is a testament to the hard work and efforts the KRG has made to create awareness of Kurdistan since 2008.

## Kurdistan offers tremendous offerings to people who want to connect with culture, heritage, and history.

### Key drivers ensured visitor growth in the KRI

1. KRG regulatory policies, which have increased the inflow of visitors. Forty nationalities are now eligible for a visa valid for 30 days upon arrival for entry into the KRI, which has helped increase the number of visitors.
2. Providing public-sector infrastructure investment played a key role in building top-class roads and internal transport links facilitating travel into and across the KRI.
3. Robust security and low crime rates have been key factors in attracting visitors.
4. Attracting numerous events, festivals and activities which have raised the demand of tourists to visit.

The KRI's tourism sector has the potential to experience growth as the relatively undiscovered destination attracts a number of local and foreign adventurers and cultural explorers to its leisure offerings. One of the future growth areas for tourism are dependent on the development of Kurdistan's adventure and archeological tourism assets.

### Archeological Tourism

The KRG's tourism development plan calls for promotion of its archeological tourism offerings, to become a player in the archeological tourism market. Kurdistan offers a

**Kurdistan has the potential to become a regional draw for adventure-related activities and a popular place for outdoor tourism.**

wide selection of historic places. There are currently over 1,300 archeological sites in the KRI. Public and private sector leaders believe that by increasing awareness of Kurdistan's archeological sites, the sector can attract record numbers of visitors in the years to come.

### Adventure Tourism

Kurdistan's unique natural assets and outdoor attractions provide the Region with a stronger ground to showcase itself as an adventure tourism destination. Entrepreneurs aim to tap into a growing movement for "adventure tourism," while KRG planners try to square the Region's desire to attract more tourists with the protection of its natural resources. Investment in adventure tourism will draw local and international tourists and will help to establish the KRI as a key leisure destination of choice in the region.



## Since 2006, local and international investors have poured \$7.8 billion into the Region's tourism industry.

### Investments

Tourism is slowly beginning to play a larger role in the Kurdish economy. Since 2006, local and international investors have poured \$7.8 billion into the Region's tourism industry. Around 40% of that total has come from foreign investors, mainly those in the UAE, Turkey, and Lebanon according to data from the Kurdistan Board of Investment.

Erbil has dominated tourism investments, with 82 projects licensed since 2006 and a total investment of around \$5.5 billion. Duhok was home to 59 licensed tourism investment projects valued at nearly \$853 million over the same period.

Although the Slemani governorate saw



### Tourism Investment by Governorates

|          |               |
|----------|---------------|
| Erbil:   | \$5.5 billion |
| Slemani: | \$1.4 billion |
| Duhok:   | \$853 million |

just 20 licensed tourism investment projects in that time, the total value of investment in the tourism sector there actually surpassed that of Duhok, at \$1.4 billion.

The KRG seeks to raise foreign investment in the sector over the next four years to bolster Kurdistan's profile as a regional tourism destination and have laid out plans to further improve Kurdistan's road infrastructure to facilitate travel across the Region.

One of the most visible tourism development projects in Kurdistan was the Korek Mountain Resort and Spa, a \$95 million venture that draws winter sports enthusiasts from Iraq and across the Middle East to the KRI. Another significant tourism investment project, the \$2 billion-dollar Dukan Tourist City project, is under construction. The project seeks to build a resort complex of hotels, restaurants, and residences on the shores of Lake Dukan near Slemani. The Dukan lake project is expected to become the centerpiece of Kurdistan's outdoor leisure offerings.

**The \$2 billion-dollar Dukan Tourist City project is under construction. The project seeks to build a resort complex of hotels, restaurants, and residences on the shores of Lake Dukan near Slemani.**

### Hospitality

The KRG has been successful in encouraging private-sector investment in hospitality sector. The KRI has 453 hotels, with a total 19,702 room capacity. If the KRI reaches its goal of 5 million visitors by 2025, the hospitality sector will need additional rooms to meet demand.

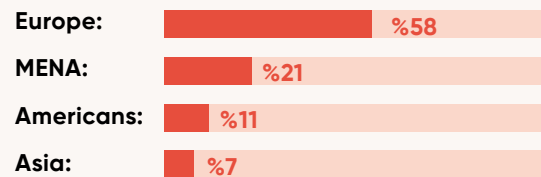
#### The growth of the hotels in the KRI



Since 2007, 414 new hotels have been opened, increasing the total number of hotels in Kurdistan to 453.

The KRI is a popular weekend destination for a number of southern Iraqis, who constitute a significant percentage of visitors. The second group of hotel guests are foreigners who visit the KRI for business purposes. These visitors are employees of energy, pharmaceutical, manufacturing, media, nongovernmental and governmental bodies. The outlook for the KRI's hospitality sector is expected to gain strength, with an influx of southern Iraqis and business events.

#### Foreign hotel guests



The KRI's hospitality industry performance was strong in 2019, with double-digit increases in room revenue, and average length of stay — figures that were particularly impressive considering average room revenue fell during 2016 and 2017. In 2019, average occupancy reached around 65%, a 25% increase from 2017.

### MICE market

The KRI is working to expand its meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) tourism sector.

The KRG's tourism development plans have relied on a diversity of events that focused strategically on organizing and hosting exhibitions, conferences and events, which are in line with the KRG's diversification policies.

The KRI has begun to host more major conferences and events in recent years. In 2019, Kurdistan hosted the Middle East Tourism Expo and the Middle East Congress on Pharmaceuticals for the first time. The expansion of the MICE market reflects the KRI's rapid growth in the tourism industry and increasing status as a secure business tourism location. In this vein, it is expected that hosting unique regional events will give a powerful stimulus to the tourism sector in the KRI.

**The Kurdistan Region of Iraq is one of the safest places in the Middle East. There is minimal risk from crime, and tourists can move around in safety.**



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## Right on Track

*Sasan Awni*

Minister of Municipalities and Tourism  
Kurdistan Regional Government

### Minister Sasan Awni discusses on the KRI's potential for archeological tourism and the investment opportunities in Kurdistan's tourism sector.



**Kurdistan is a virgin tourism destination, and as such, all areas of activity are potential drivers. For investors, there are plenty of reasons to enter the sector.**

#### What are the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KRI) key offerings for tourists?

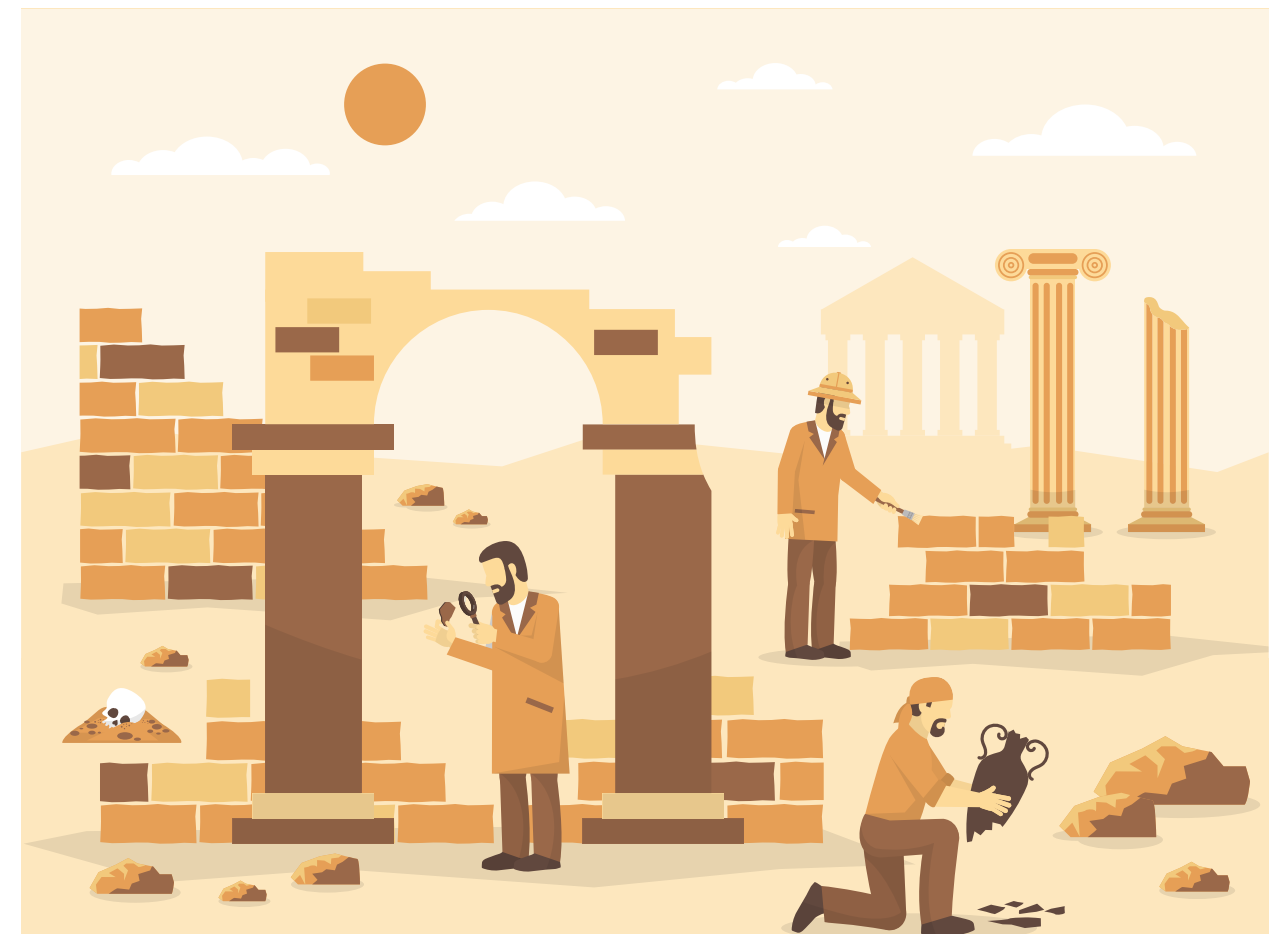
Kurdistan is a historical land with breathtaking natural beauty. The Region is filled with enchanting landscapes, waterfalls, rivers, lakes, and mountains. Tourists from all over the world visit Kurdistan to go cliff-climbing, mountaineering, and hiking. In addition to its beautiful landscape, Kurdistan has witnessed an explosion in archeological research since 2010. There are now thousands of archeological sites in the KRI. Moreover, our welcoming culture, stability and security are also key attributes, attracting tourists. Our aim is to promote all these features at the regional and international levels and to brand Kurdistan as a tourism destination.

**We have developed a masterplan to develop tourism, covering 67 projects in total.**

#### Where are the greatest investment opportunities in Kurdistan's tourism sector?

The KRG has the firm intention to make the tourism sector a driver for economic growth. Thus, investment is the cornerstone of our tourism development agenda.

According to the Kurdistan Board of Investment data, during the first nine months of 2019, tourism topped the other sectors in the Region as a result of investment projects with \$1 billion budget being allocated to. There is a wide range of opportunities in the hospitality sector in the KRI thanks to its rapidly growing tourism sector. We have developed a masterplan to develop tourism, covering 67 projects in total. These include amusement parks and aquariums in the main cities of the KRI.



#### How would you define the KRI's potential for archeological tourism?

Kurdistan has significant untapped potential in terms of archeological tourism, and it could become a leading destination in the region. There are thousands of archeological sites and over eight thousand archeological artifacts have been discovered in the KRI. We have placed a particular importance on archeological tourism, and various projects are underway focusing on the development of ancient sites as tourist destinations. In order to commercialize this potential, we have published archeological booklets and tourism guides in multiple languages to target a broader audience. We also actively use social media to promote the Region. We also work to have Kurdistan's most prominent areas included in the tour packages offered by travel companies. As mentioned, Kurdistan has witnessed an explosion in archeological research since 2010. International teams have carried out excavation and exploration activities at many of Kurdistan's archeological sites.

**Kurdistan has significant untapped potential in terms of archeological tourism, and it could become a leading destination in the region.**

The Focus

# ERBIL

## The Capital

**Kurdistan's stable and progressive capital has a unique identity, calm charm, and long history. Erbil is in pursuit of positioning itself as a leading brand in the region.**

### The world's longest-inhabited city

Kurdistan's capital of Erbil is the world's longest-inhabited city. The beginning of life in Erbil is associated with the creation of the historic Erbil Citadel, which has been continuously inhabited since at least 6000 BCE. The citadel, which sits atop a plateau, has inspired the development of the city as a whole, which forms increasingly large, concentric rings expanding out from the structure.

***Erbil's landmark citadel was officially added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2014.***

Erbil has gained significant international recognition for its cultural patrimony. Erbil's landmark citadel was officially added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2014. UNESCO's World Heritage Committee members voting in favor of World Heritage status for the structure cited the citadel's nearly 6,000-year history and its significance as one of the world's oldest continually inhabited settlements.

### Cityscape Transformation

One of Middle East's strongest performers between 2008 and 2014, the Kurdish economy was growing at between 8 and 10 percent a year, and investment was increasing steadily. This led the quick transformation of its capital, Erbil.

***National Geographic Magazine named Erbil as one of its "Best Trips" of 2014. In the same year, the Arab Council of Tourism chose Erbil as its "Arab Tourism Capital".***

Kurdistan's capital has been experiencing an infrastructure boom that is reshaping its future. New roads, restaurants, coffee shops, hotels, residences, universities, museums, and an airport, built in Erbil since 2008, have entirely changed the city's life and landscape.









**Channeling its influence**

The combination of good security, stability, and easygoing vibes makes Erbil the staging ground for anyone aiming to expand investment into Iraq. When it comes to business and diplomacy in Erbil, you don't only have Turkey, Iran, Jordan, and the Gulf States, but also EU countries, the US, the UK, Russia, China, India, Canada, and Japan.

*Part of what is driving Erbil's attractiveness is the return of the Kurdish diaspora. Young Kurdish professionals are bringing a lot of know-how to the city.*

**Safe**

Erbil ranks among the top-five safest cities in the world according to data collected from Numbeo in 2018. The Kurdish capital has benefited from instability in the southern part of Iraq. The headquarters of many businesses, foreign outposts, and aid organizations have migrated to stable and safe Kurdistan.

*Erbil ranks among the top-five safest cities in the world according to data collected from Numbeo in 2018.*

**Becoming an Event Hub**

The Kurdish government realizes the economic importance of exhibitions and festivals in the past decade and has developed the infrastructure to establish its capital as a hub for

regional events. This strategy has materialized with the events and festivals industry becoming vital to reviving various economic sectors in Erbil, including hospitality, agriculture, and construction, which are all the country's main non-oil industries.

*Erbil has been slowly but surely raising the bar of excellence in organizing and hosting professional events and festivals.*

**Tolerant**

Erbil is regarded as a religiously tolerant city. Erbil's social contract is based on peaceful coexistence. There are no hostile attitudes towards different religious groups, since all different groups are treated with sensitivity.

**Green & Clean**

Erbil municipality aims to transform the city into a green haven in the long term. In accordance with this objective, Erbil is expanding and preserving its green spaces. There are currently 15 large parks and 380 smaller ones inside residential areas in Erbil. The objective is to open 25 new parks a year. Erbil's Sami Abdul Rahman Park is one of the largest parks not only in Iraq but also in the wider Middle East.

*Erbil is expanding and preserving its green spaces.*

# Must-Visit Places in Erbil Province



## 1. Shrine of Raban Boya

The shrine of Raban Boya is located in Shaqlawa, and dates back to the fourth century. It consists of a church, graveyard, and complex that leads to the Raban Boya Cave, which was originally settled as a monastery.

## 2. Shaqlawa

Kurdistan could become the Middle East's next big adventure tourism destination with its spectacular mountains, wild rivers, and untouched nature. The stunning green landscape of Shaqlawa is one of the most popular holiday destinations in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

## 3. Rawanduz

Surrounded by majestic mountains, Rawanduz is home to the deepest gorge in the Middle East. The city's history dates back to the seventh century BC and boasts several Christian villages and archaeological sites.

## 4. Khanzad Citadel

Khanzad Citadel is located in Shaqlawa. Princess Khanzad built the castle during the Soran Emirate of the 16th century. Made of stone and gypsum, much of its original structure is intact.

## 5. Bradost Mountain

Located in Erbil Province, Bradost Mountain rises over 1,520 meters above sea level. The mountainous area offers spectacular scenery and untouched nature.

## 6. Ali Begg Valley

Located in Erbil Province, picturesque Ali Begg Valley is one of the preferred destinations for local tourists.



## 7. Shanidar Cave

Shanidar Cave is one of the most famous archeological sites located on Bradost Mountain in Erbil Province. In the 1950s, Ralph Solecki unearthed the fossilized bones of ten Neanderthal skeletons at the Shanidar Cave, dating them to between 65,000 and 35,000 years ago. The discovery changed the understanding of early hominids, from their ability to walk upright to their possession of a more sophisticated culture than had

previously been assumed. Shanidar Cave was originally excavated by an American team. Now a British team has resumed its investigation after a five-decade hiatus.

## 8. Bestoon Cave

Bestoon Cave is located in Soran and has an impressive history, dating back to the Stone Age. It is believed that Neanderthals once used to reside in this cave, though it has not been excavated to date.

## 9. Korek Mountain

Located in Erbil Province, Korek is one of Iraqi Kurdistan's most prominent mountains. Korek rises 2,120 meters above sea level and its slopes are considered some of the best places in Kurdistan to go skiing, complete with beautiful, panoramic views. Thus, the mountain is a popular winter tourism destination locally, while also attracting foreign tourists to its annual snow festival.





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### 10. Barzan

There is no reason to stay indoors when you are in Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurdistan's most scenic landscapes are best enjoyed on foot. Located in Erbil Province, Barzan's breathtaking scenery is a must-see for foreign and local visitors alike.

### 11. Koya

Located in Erbil Province, Koya is a historical city that dates back to at least 2,500 BC. Koya enjoyed great prestige under the Gothers and was also occupied by the Assyrians and Medians. Many scholars, poets, and artists have lived in Koya. The town has a growing urban population, which now totals more than 46,000. There are several tourist attractions and over a hundred archeological sites in Koya.

Koya has one of the oldest bazaars in the region, with shops and stands selling

a wide variety of local products. Step through the ancient arched doorways and explore the alleyways that define history. The market is located in the center of the city.

### 12. Halgurd Mountain

Located 170 km north-east of Erbil, Halgurd mountain is the highest mountain in Iraq, at 3,607 meters above sea level. The peak of the mountain is covered with snow throughout the year. There are many springs and lakes around the mountain that add to the lush scenery. There are also various birds and endemic plant species. Halgurd Mountain is a center for birdwatching, botany, and the cultivation of medicinal herbs. Halgurd-Sakaran National Park extends from Sakran Mountain to Haji Omaran and Sidakan District. The National Park is visited

by tourists from all over Iraq as well as other foreign countries who come in search of adventure and hiking.

### 13. Balakayati

Balakayati is located within Choman, a district of Erbil Province. The area attracts local and foreign tourists.

### 14. Qshla Koya

Qshla is a town located in the center of Koya. Although historians can't agree on the date of its foundation, the fort was constructed by the Ottomans in the second half of the 18th century during the rule of the Ottoman Governor Midhat Pasha of Baghdad. It was later used by the British and has since been well renovated. Inside is a park, a tomb, and some exhibits of Kurdish culture and crafts.

### 15. Monastery of Mar Bena Qadisho

Located in the Christian village of Armota at the edge of Koya, this monastery was first built in the fourth century by Saint Banham's followers. This small monastery was destroyed by Saddam Hussein's forces in 1988. Using original stones, the chapel was rebuilt in 1996. The first Friday after Easter is the big feast of Mar Bena, and the entire area is filled with people picnicking and celebrating.

### 16. Choman

Choman is one of the leading adventure tourism hotspots in the Kurdistan Region Iraq. The varied scenery, from popular tourist attractions to wild landscapes, has earned Choman a well-deserved reputation as a major hiking destination in Kurdistan. Choman's annual winter festival attracts skiers from across the world.

The Focus

# SLEMANI

## A Cultural Capital

Known as the cultural capital of Kurdistan, Slemani is buzzing with energy from parks, museums, cultural centers, and its vibrant art scene.

The modern city of Slemani was founded in 1784. Today, with a population of over 800,000, Slemani is the second-largest city in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Landmarks like museums, local art galleries, universities, scenic parks, shopping malls, modern cafes, and restaurants are changing the face of the city.

Although its sights are firmly set on the future, Slemani puts great emphasis on preserving its cultural heritage. Thanks to the vision of the city's leadership, paired with the ambition of local artists, Slemani has solidified its reputation as a center of culture in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Slemani is a place where modern expression fuses with Kurdish heritage and traditional practices. Several cultural events are organized in Slemani throughout the year, ranging from focuses on literature, art, design, music, and other the traditions of the Kurdish people.

Designated a Creative City of Literature by UNESCO, Slemani has been a home to some of the Kurdistan's greatest writers. The city holds an annual international book fair, which attracts local and international printing and publishing houses, and famous writers

### Slemani was named the Creative City of Literature by UNESCO in 2019.

One of the city's leading cultural events is the Slemani International Film Festival (SIFF). Since 2016, SIFF serves as a platform to promote cultural understanding, giving the opportunity to many ambitious local and regional film makers to shine. Focused on climate change, 154 films from 78 countries competed for recognition in different at the SIFF's 2019 event.

You don't necessarily need to visit a museum or gallery to experience great art in Slemani. The city is Kurdistan's

most charming open-air canvas and an ideal point for a self-guided street art safari. Collections of spray-painted masterpieces are on public display thanks to talented Kurdish street artists.

Slemani is a home to many of the KRI's most prestigious higher-education institutions. The city houses two public and five private universities. The wide range of things to do may in part be attributed to the city's universities and students. The students leave their mark on the city by arranging their own events, as well as attending the city's other cultural offerings.

Slemani maintains its refreshing closeness to nature that few other Iraqi cities can match. The city is surrounded by beautiful, winding mountain ranges, with everything from hiking, skiing, and birdwatching on offer.

Slemani is very safe and worth exploring.

### Hawary Shar Park

Slemani's landmark Hawary Shar park, one of the biggest in the Middle East, covers an area of 1,000 square kilometers. Over 3,000 trees have been planted along the surrounding valley. The park has many attractions including Fountain Lake, a cycling track, a skateboarding park, and a 5,000-seat, open-air auditorium built in the style of the colosseum in Rome. The amphitheater aims to host international and local arts festivals, while showcasing Kurdish culture.

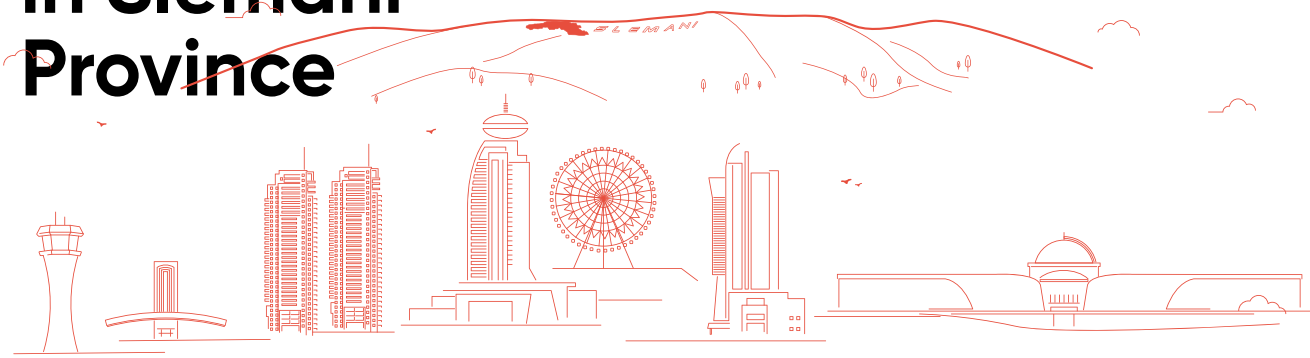


### Sarchnar Park

Sarchnar Park is Slemani's main recreational area for people from all over the city. Sarchnar has a wide green area and a beautiful lake. There are several cafés and restaurants, as well as a playground for children.



# Must-Visit Places in Slemani Province



## 1. Rock-Reliefs of Mountain Rabana and Merquli

The mountains Merquli and Rabana are part of the Pira Magroon mountain, 2,624 meters above sea level, making it the highest peak in Slemani Province. The Rabana and Merquli rock reliefs, 1.5 kilometers apart and showcasing the same style, were discovered in 1993 and 1999 respectively. Excavation in the area revealed a citadel and associated structures in 2009, and determined that both sites constitute a single cluster. Rabana and Merquli together form an important part of the settlement on the north-western frontier of the Parthian Empire, according to the British Institute's Study of Iraq paper, published by Cambridge University. Supported by archaeological evidence, both reliefs belong to the period of the Parthian Empire, the dominant political and military power in Persia and parts of



neighboring Mesopotamia for nearly half a millennium, between around 250 BC and 226 AD.

## 2. Ahmad Awa Waterfall

The best time to visit KRI's many scenic waterfalls is in May, when melting ice and snow from the surrounding mountains means high water levels are at their highest. Located 84 km east of Slemani, the Ahmad Awa waterfall is just one of many, and is a part of the Zallim River, located near the town of Khurmal.

## 3. Hazar Merd Cave

Located in 13 kilometers away from the city of Slemani, Hazar Merd was first excavated by famous British archeologist Dorothy Garrod in 1928. The paleolithic cave of Hazar Merd is considered the second-oldest cave in Kurdistan, dating back to 50,000 BC.



## 4. Bazyan Citadel

The Bazyan archaeological site was first identified in 19th century by the British archaeologist Claudius James Rich, who mistakenly classified it as a caravanserai. The current excavation was started in 2011 by a team headed by Vincent Déroche and Narmen Ali Muhamad Amen from Salahaddin University, and has revealed that the structure was established as a monastery during the Sassanian Empire. The church on the Bazyan site was identified as having been built by Syriac-speaking Christians towards 6th century.

## 5. Naram-Sin Rock Relief

The rock relief, which depicts Naram-Sin, the king of Akkadian Empire between 2261 and 2224 BC, is located on Darband-i-Gawr on the south-eastern side of the Qara Dagh mountain, which is 1,700 meters above sea level. The relief depicts Naram-Sin's successful military campaign against Satuni, king of the Lullubi. Under Naram-Sin's rule, the Akkadian empire reached its height.

## 6. Darbandikhan Lake

Darbandikhan Lake is Kurdistan's second-largest lake. It is a manmade reservoir created for irrigation and hydropower generation, as well as recreation. The overall area of Darbandikhan lake is about 72 square kilometers and is a hot spot for picnics, swimming, and fishing. Darbandikhan is listed as an important bird and biodiversity area by BirdLife International.

### 7. Darband-i Belula Rock Relief

This rock relief is located on Slemani Province's Darbandi Belula mountain and dates back to the Akkadian era, between 2350 and 2006 BC. The relief depicts a victorious man with two captives before him, one kneeling and the other under his foot.

### 8. Tombs of Qizqapan

The tombs of Qizqapan is located near Zarzi Village in Chemi Rezan Valley of Slemani Province. Scholars predicts that rock-cut tombs date back to the Median-Achaemenid period between 600 and 550 BC.

### 9. Sartka Citadel

Sartka Citadel is located in the Dukan Lake area within Slemani Province. The citadel was built by Prince Muhammad, who was the ruler of Soran Emirate between 1813 and 1837. The surrounding landscape is a charming hiking spot.

### 10. Dukan Lake

Dukan, the largest lake in the KRI, is located close to the city of Ranya in Slemani Province. The lake was created by the construction of the Dukan Dam, built to provide irrigation and hydropower. The area of Dukan Lake is about 251 square kilometers. Dukan is one of KRI's top locations for picnics, swimming, boating, and fishing. The surrounding area is used for agriculture and over seventy villages are situated around the basin. One of Dukan's most impressive features is that it is home to more than 180 species of birds.



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### 11. Paikuli Tower

Paikuli Tower is located close to Barkal Village in Slemani Province. The tower was built by the Sasanian King Narseh to celebrate his victory in a dynastic struggle against his nephew Warham III to become the seventh king of the Sassanian Empire in 293 CE. The monument's bilingual inscription, written in Parthian and Middle Persian, is one of the primary sources on the early Sasanian period. Since 2006, Italian archeology teams have been working on Paikuli stone reliefs, which are now on display in the Slemani Museum.



The Focus

# DUHOK PROVINCE

## The Land of Charm

**Duhok's ancient history and rich cultural heritage certainly make the province a much more interesting place where multicultural and multilingual people of different faiths can live together in peace and harmony.**

Duhok Province, a gateway for Iraqi Kurdistan, is situated in an important location at a junction between Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. The capital of this Province, Duhok city, lies nestled in a valley between two mountains, Bekhair to the north and Zawa in the southeast, along the Tigris River. Duhok city makes up the area administrated by Duhok Province along with another six districts: Akre, Amedi, Simele, Zakho, Sheikhan and Bardarash. The population of Duhok

province is around 1.2 million, but it has continued to grow in recent years.

The land of Duhok, which has hosted many civilizations for several centuries, shines with its multi-cultural identity and peaceful coexistence. Different communities live in many districts, towns and villages of the Duhok province. Assyrians, Chaldeans, Armenians, and Arabs live together in peace in these places, where the majority of the people are Kurdish.

The Province is also hosting more than one million IDPs and refugees.

Within Duhok province there are over 40 remarkable archeological sites; ancient ruins, caves, carved stones, churches dating back a thousand years, mosques, and synagogues. The Province is a very popular holiday destination for local tourists. However, this ancient land has not yet managed to attract deserved numbers of visitors from abroad.

### 1. Akre

Akre is located 100 km. east of Duhok province. Built on the slope of a mountain, the ancient city of Akre is distinguished itself with its old houses constructed of yellow-brown stones. The city retains a traditional architectural style. Archeologists have only begun to scratch the surface of Akre's treasures. There are hundreds of archeological sites in Akre. The city is well-known for the largest Newroz celebration in Iraqi Kurdistan. Considering its long history and rich heritage, the city has the potential to become a major cultural tourism destination.



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### 2. Shrine of Sheikh Abdulaziz Gilani

Sufism, a mystical movement of Islam, has existed in Iraqi Kurdistan for several centuries. Sheikh Abdulaziz Gilani, founder of the Qadri Sufi dervish order, was a respected Sufi leader who died in 1205. The Sheikh Abdulaziz takiye (dervish lodge) functions as the ritual center, attracting dervishes from the region. The dervish lodge, which attracts tens of thousands of pilgrims annually, is the most important center of pilgrimage and ritual life for Sufis in Iraqi Kurdistan.

### 3. Charsteen Cave

It is believed that the cave was a Zoroastrian fire-temple. The temple is made up of five sanctuaries, three of which were carved into rock. The remaining two were constructed from stone blocks.

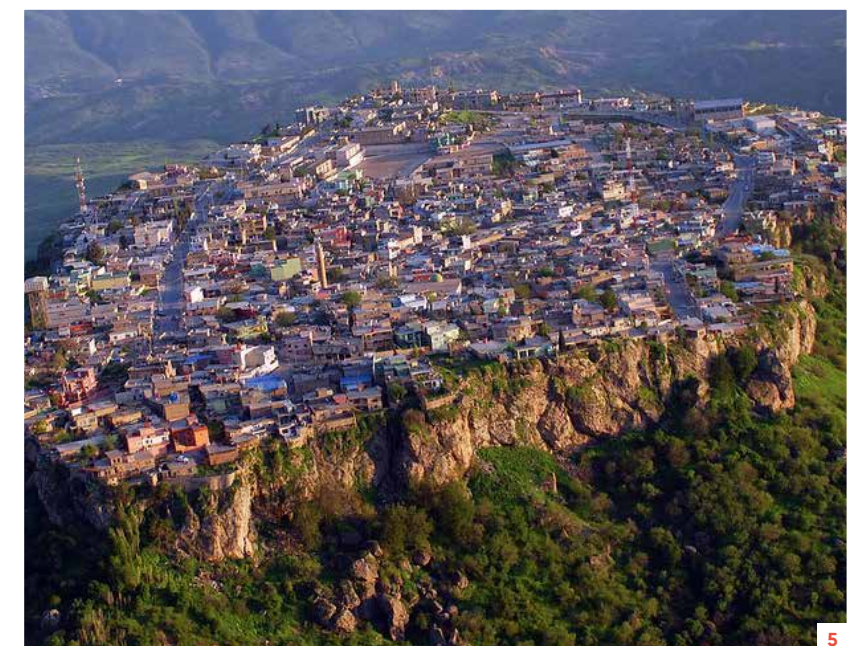
### 4 Maltai Reliefs

The reliefs were carved in the 7th century B.C. during the reign of the Assyrian king Sennacherib. Reliefs consist of three panels showing King Sennacherib facing a procession of Assyrian gods depicted in human form and mounted on animals. The panels are cut 200 meters high into the rocky side of the Zawa Mountain, in Duhok's village of Geverke.

### 5. Amedi

The ancient city of Amedi sits in a landscape of high mountains, 1,400 meters above sea level, in Duhok province. This small mountain-top city's history dates back to the Assyrian Empire era, 2,500 B.C. Amedi has been able to preserve its unique characteristics. Because of its ancient history and diverse culture and heritage, Amedi is a landmark of Kurdistan. The city attracts visitors not only for its history but also for its natural beauty. Amedi was listed in Iraq's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites by UNESCO in 2011. It was also nominated for the World Monuments Watch List in 2016.

The city symbolizes the religious diversity and co-existence in Iraqi Kurdistan. Historically, Kurds, Jews and Christians have lived together for centuries in Amedi. A small Christian community still lives in the Christian quarter on the west side of town. Amedi was also an important center of Jewish life for centuries. There were two synagogues in Amedi in the 12th century. The city's Qubahan School was an important education center for Islamic studies for several centuries. The school was linked with al-Azhar University in Cairo, and attracted students from around the Muslim world.



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### 6. Zakho

Zakho, with a population of 350,000, is located in the northwest of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq a few kilometers from the Iraqi-Turkish border. According to oral tradition, the city was established in the 16th century, although it is also thought to have been known to the ancient Greeks. Zakho has been a trading center since at least the 1800s, and it still serves much of north and central Iraq.

Zakho has a long history of religious and ethnic diversity. Assyrians have lived in Zakho since at least the 5th century and there is a sizable Armenian community. During the 1960s, Christians made up over 40 percent of the city's population. Zakho was also once known as "The Jerusalem of Mesopotamia" because of its synagogues and historically large Jewish community. The Jews

of the city had a unique and rich oral tradition famous for its legends, epics and ballads, with heroes inspired by both Jewish and Muslim traditions. Most of the city's Jews relocated to Israel in the 1950s, and the current population mainly consists of Kurds, Chaldeans and Assyrians.

### 7. Monastery of Saint Odisho

Mar Odisho Monastery is located in Dere, four kilometers east of Amedi. The Monastery, dating back to the fourth century, still serves the Assyrian community.

### 8. Pira Delal Bridge

Dating back to the early years of Abbasid dynasty (750-1517), Pira Delal is Zakho's landmark. The bridge is 115 meters long and 16 meters high at its apex.

### 9. Mar Mattai Monastery

Founded in the fourth century, Mar Mattai Monastery is nestled into the Mount Alfaf, 20 kilometers from Mosul. The Syriac-Orthodox Monastery is considered one of the oldest Christian monasteries in existence. The Monastery holds a wide range of collection of Syriac Christian manuscripts.

### 10. Shrine of Jewish Prophet Nahum

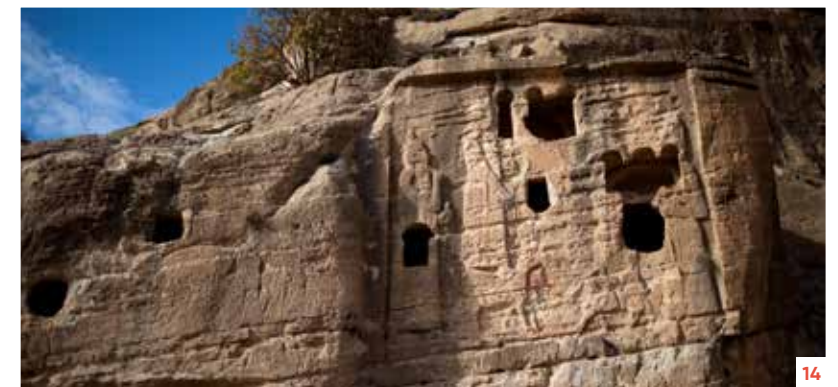
The tomb of Jewish Prophet Nahum is located in the Christian town of al-Qosh in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. While the prophet lived in the seventh century B.C.E., his legendary tomb dates to 1173 C.E. Prophet Nahum's tomb is enclosed within Al-Qosh's historic synagogue. For centuries the tomb was a major site of Jewish pilgrimage during Shavuot.

### 11. Gali Sherana

Located in Duhok Province, Gali Sherana is one of the preferred tourist destinations due to its untouched, spectacular natural beauty.

### 12. Rabban Hormizd Monastery

Established in the 7th century, it is one of the most ancient Christian monasteries in Iraq. It is an ancient sanctuary, one of the most important holy sites for the Chaldean Christian Church. The Monastery is located on the border of the KRG administrative area, two kilometers from Alqosh city center. Carved into the mountains, the 1,400-year-old Monastery overlooks a stunning view of the valley below. Besides the vault of its saint founder, the monastery hosts a large number of tombs of Nestorian monks, abbots and patriarchs, as well as Chaldean monks, abbots and patriarchs.



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### 13. Lalish

Lalish is the spiritual center of the Yazidi faith, which includes elements of pre-Islamic Mesopotamia as well as elements of Judaism, Nestorian Christianity, and Islam. The temple includes the tomb of Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir, the founder of Yazidism, who lived in Lalish in the 12th century. Lalish is the focal point of an annual pilgrimage of Yazidi, who are an important ethnic component of the Kurdistan mosaic.

### 14. Khinnis Reliefs

Located in Duhok province's Shekhan town, the Khinnis reliefs portray Sennacherib, the king of Assyria from 705 BC to 681 BC, worshipping the deities Ashur and Ninlil. King Sennacherib constructed a complex water canal system in Khinnis to supply the capital of the empire, Nineveh, and its hinterland. Khinnis was included on the 2014 World Monuments Watch to increase awareness of heritage assets in the area.



**“We incorporate the latest in leisure and business technology, luxury accommodation and amenities, redefining the concept of the business hotel from the ground up.”**

**Can Unluer,  
General Manager, Divan Erbil Hotel**

The Brand

# DIVAN ERBIL

## State-of-the-art Luxury

**Divan Erbil has been named Iraq’s leading business hotel for six consecutive years.**

As a worthy addition to Divan Group’s collection of fine five-star hotels, Divan Erbil has brought innovative style and luxury to the heart of Erbil, the world’s longest-inhabited city.

Divan Erbil, as the most visually striking modern structure in the city and already a local landmark, has an unbeatable location and layout, as well as top-level security measures, a variety of well-equipped guest suites (all measuring between 45 and 300 square meters), and a range of cosmopolitan dining options, including local and Turkish delicacies, and international favorites from as far away as the Far East.



**Divan Erbil welcomes its patrons with its resplendent décor, featuring crystal chandeliers, brass-lined columns, marble floors, antique furniture, and an elegant selection of art.**

**For these and other efforts, Divan Erbil has been declared Iraq’s leading business hotel six years in a row.**



### *Upscale Sushi Restaurant*

When people think of Erbil, sushi is not one of the things that most readily comes to mind. However, that has been changing thanks to the sushi master chef Mitsuru Imatai's delicious offerings at Divan Erbil Hotel's Qi21 sushi restaurant. "Sushi chefs work with raw ingredients and the dish is served raw to the customer. Thus, the most important thing is to use fresh produce and to follow strict guidelines when preparing sushi. At Qi21 we handle all ingredients with care, from storage to preparation to presentation," Sushi Master Chef Mitsuru Imata says.



### *The Best Fitness & Wellness Club in Erbil*

Divan's Wellness Center is the most well equipped and innovative facility of its kind in Erbil. The facility features a 20-meter semi-Olympic-sized indoor pool, as well as a sauna, a steam room, a Turkish bath, and message suites. It provides premier therapeutic treatments provided by certified spa therapists.



### Chopin Bar

The Chopin Bar has the rare distinction of being both an excellent meeting location and a superb late-night destination. During the day, Chopin features a variety of lighter dining selections.

In the evening, the space transforms into a lively piano bar featuring live music.



### Divan Erbil at a glance

**228 rooms & suites**

**Club Lounge**

**International restaurants**

**Fitness & Wellness Club**

**Swimming pool**

**10 meeting rooms**

**Business center**

**Car-rental service**

**24-hour security**

## +150 trees

### Green Erbil

As part of its corporate social responsibility policy, Divan Erbil is committed to supporting environmental conservation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Divan Erbil recently funded the planting of 150 trees at a newly built government eye hospital in Erbil.





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students follow a proven educational approach that builds a solid academic foundation and helps all students achieve their full potential.

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# 04

## Chapter four:

# Quality of Life



**Quality of life is one of the most powerful drivers in influencing people's perception and in decision-making about business and leisure. We zoom in on five subcategories — health, education, human capital, safety and environment —under the quality of life.**

# Planning for the Future

*Saman Hussein Muhammad*  
Minister of Health

## Minister Saman Hussein Muhammad discusses on the Ministry of Health's strategic plan.



**Our main strategic plan is to reform the health, medical and food sectors to meet international standards. We plan to establish a “Food and Drugs Administration” under the Council of Ministers.**

### What are the key projects of the Ministry of Health (MoH)?

Our main strategic plan is to reform the health, medical and food sectors to meet international standards. We plan to establish a “Food and Drugs Administration” under the Council of Ministers. Moreover, our plan includes improving our preventive and primary healthcare services by making family physicians available at most primary healthcare centers in line with international standards. Also, we are planning to make the allocation of human resources fairer by setting up a detailed plan for the placement of physicians, nurses, and health assistants to areas according to their population size and needs. This will include placing doctors and nurses in remote areas which currently lack medical services. Furthermore, we will improve our emergency health services by making them accessible to everyone and by reorganizing our Public and Private Partnership (PPP) system. Other plans include improving our health information systems; re-organizing the existing legislation related to forensic medicine law; establishing a

health insurance system; regulating food and drug imports; and revisiting legislation regarding physicians' and patients' rights.

### What are your plans to modernize hospitals and to provide new hospital beds?

We currently have 7,794 hospital beds and 897 health centers distributed among the cities of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Of course, these hospitals and health centers are now dated and were built to older standards, but the MoH continues to work to modernize these hospitals and update all our medical equipment.

We are committed to establishing new hospitals, with various specializations, spread over the provinces of the KRI. These will have a clinical capacity of 4,230 beds, implemented according to the latest international standards. We also plan to establish large numbers of health centers. We are working hard to implement a number of health projects using a PPP arrangement.

### What are your plans for addressing the shortage of doctors and nurses in the KRI?

There is a shortage of doctors in some subspecialties (anesthesia, emergency, family medicine, burns) also we have a shortage in nursing staff. Our plan will be to increase the number of graduated doctors and nursing staff by increasing enrollment into higher education, encouraging post-graduate study in rarer subspecialties, and redistributing medical and nursing staff (currently there is an unfair regional distribution).

**Our plan includes improving our preventive and primary healthcare services by making family physicians available at most primary healthcare centers in line with international standards.**

### What is your policy on improving the quality of pharmaceuticals in the KRI?

Our planned policy for improving the quality of pharmaceuticals can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Enhancing standards for medicines and medical products' accreditation & registration
2. Increasing registration criteria for medical product facilities
3. Strengthening auditing standards for shipping and transport documents
4. Strengthening storage and distribution standards
5. Increasing laboratory testing capabilities, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to allow for the inclusion of drugs with special requirements such as hormones, vaccines, anticancer etc.
6. Increasing the follow-up and checking of medicines' efficiency after dispensing
7. Strengthening checks of official and unofficial outlets with respect to substandard, illegal or fake medicines
8. Encouraging domestic facilities to participate effectively in the pharmaceutical sector.







# Awamedica

The Brand

since  
2006

**Awamedica was established in 2006 with the aim of producing high-quality medicines and tackling the problem of counterfeit medicine in the KRI. Since its establishment, the company has managed to help reduce the share of counterfeit medicine in the KRI significantly.**

**Awamedica is a ground-breaking pharmaceutical company in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The company is registered with the Ministries of Health of Iraq and the KRI as an A class domestic manufacturer.**



### Quality Assurance

Awamedica has established a high-quality pharmaceuticals factory that complies with all international regulations, producing the same quality of products as those found in Western markets.

Awamedica complies with all the good manufacturing process (GMP) standards, international guidelines for pharmaceutical manufacturing. Awamedica has two ISO certificates (ISO 9001) and (ISO 14001) along with the GMP certificate.

Additionally, the company has a department for quality control, which uses analytical chemistry, physical chemistry, stability studies, microbiology, and other areas to ensure the quality of its products. Awamedica carries out close checks on every stage in its production processes and ensures that everything complies with Western pharmaceutical regulations. The company has achieved its success by remaining committed to this high-quality production process.

**Awamedica has a large quality assurance department to ensure that every aspect of production meets international good manufacturing process standards, and everyone must follow this standard operating procedure.**





### International Partners

In the longer term, Awamedica aspires to increase its international exposure. Awamedica established a partnership with Sanofi, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, in 2011. Its partnership with international pharmaceutical companies helps Awamedica to maintain its aim as a European-style company based in the KRI. The company's facilities are inspected regularly by its international partners to ensure that Awamedica consistently meets their standards.

**Established in 2006, Awamedica is the first state-of-the-art pharmaceutical manufacturer in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.**

### Products

Awamedica currently has 120 products in the Iraqi market, with further expansion planned for 2021. For each of its products, the company currently has the capacity to produce enough medication to satisfy the demand in Iraq.

Awamedica currently has five lines of production approved: oral syrup, tablet, capsule, semisolid, and dry powder. Awamedica produces specific items for the treatment of chronic diseases like high-blood pressure and diabetes. The company is planning to produce new lines of production for ampoule lines, eye drop lines, ophthalmic lines, and sachet lines in the near future.



### Production Line

*(Yearly Capacity / Units)*

**Tablets: 2.4 billion**

**Capsules: 200 million**

**Liquids: 10 million bottles**

**Ointments & Creams: 10 million tubes**

**Dry syrups: 8 million bottles**

### Human Capital

Awamedica has over two hundred employees from six different nationalities. More than twenty of the company's employees have a university degree in pharmacy or chemistry. The company's internal training programs make sure that all staff adhere to the highest international industry standards.

divan

erbil

# Privilege Club

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# Vision and Priorities for the Future

*Alan Hama Saeed Salih*  
Minister of Education

## KRG Minister of Education Alan Hama Saeed Salih on the KRG's education vision, and Ministry's top priorities and key projects.



**Our vision is to nurture a qualified, connected, tolerant, and democratic generation that will allow Kurdistan to reach its full potential.**

### What is the KRG's education vision?

Education affects the future of the entire population. It is essential to ensuring a strong workforce, and in turn a resilient economy. Thus, education has been prioritized by the KRG. Our vision is to nurture a qualified, connected, tolerant, and democratic generation that will allow Kurdistan to reach its full potential.

We have drafted a law to modernize Kurdistan's education sector and realize our vision. We will give our students the best start in life, improve their skills, and meet their ever-growing demands. Therefore, we are always looking at how we can improve the curriculum and adapt it for the rapidly changing conditions of the world.

Our educational vision is also based on promoting democratic values and tolerance. On the opening day of the education year, the PM Masrour Barzani told our students to love each other regardless of their ethnicity or religious background. The PM's words reflect our vision of educating a tolerant, peaceful, democratic generation.

### What are the priority areas for the Ministry of Education?

We will start a series of reforms to improve education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Our main priority is to meet new educational demands and improve quality. Currently, the KRG allocates around 16% of its budget to education. Our aim is to better utilize the funds that have been allocated to the education sector.

We need to guarantee that education is of a high standard in the KRI. There are 6,800 primary and secondary schools in the KRI. We will update the infrastructure of these schools in the next four years. We will also develop teacher training programs to ensure that our educators are highly qualified. There are around 130,000 teachers in the KRI, and it is important that they are all held to higher standards. Music, art, sports and other recreational activities spur innovation. Thus, we will incorporate more cultural and recreational activities into the education system.

We need to guarantee that students are being taught how to use various new technologies. Therefore, we are also working on digitizing our education by obtaining the necessary technologies.

### What is your formula for combining technology and education to prepare students for a digitally focused world?

The digital revolution is changing the nature of education globally. So, our education system needs to evolve in accordance with the digital age. We have already started to implement a digital learning solution in Kurdistan. We are working on integrating technology into the curriculum to change the model of learning and to better enable students' access to learning.

We have four key projects aimed at combining technology with education.

The first project is related to e-learning, and has one of the biggest budgets in the KRG. Through this project, we will bring all schools into the system, and 4,000 have already been integrated. We have also entered the 70% of the data needed for e-learning programs. We will finalize this project in four months.

Our second project is related to smart learning. In this project, we will upload all courses to the system. Students will be able to download the courses in pdf and multi-video format. Using this system, students can test themselves and ask questions about any parts of the subject that they don't understand. The teachers will reply online. We announced this project in November

2019. Currently, 18,835 students use this system daily. This number will increase when we upload more courses. Our teachers will also use this project to improve their skills. We will create an app so that students and teachers can upload the app on their phone and use it offline.

Our third project is related to bringing more transparency to university entry exams. In just 28 days, we have already finalized some stages of this project. Any student who queries their exam results can access the system via fingerprint and can check each of the answers to every question, making the entry exam results much more transparent and accurate. As such, our model has become more interactive and our assessments more accurate. Before this project, over 19,000 students had disputed their exam results. After the project was initiated, we reduced that number to 430. This project is unique to Iraq and even broader the Middle East.

The fourth project is related to setting up a four WhatsApp numbers. Any student who has any complains or recommendations on anything related to their education will be able to reach us, and our teams will get in touch with them immediately.

**We will start a series of reforms to improve education in the KRI. Our main priority is to meet new educational demands and improve quality.**



The International School  
of Chouefat - Erbil

# REGISTRATION OPEN!

The International School of Chouefat – Erbil is a member of the global SABIS® Network of schools which operate in 20 countries on 5 continents and educate over 70,000 students. Since 1886, schools in the SABIS® Network have been delivering a high-quality education that prepares students for success by giving them a strong foundation of knowledge, real-life skills and experiences, and the ability to engage as independent, lifelong learners.

## World-Class, International Education

The International School of Chouefat – Erbil first opened its door in 2006, bringing the SABIS® approach to education, known as the SABIS® Educational System™, to Kurdistan for the very first time.

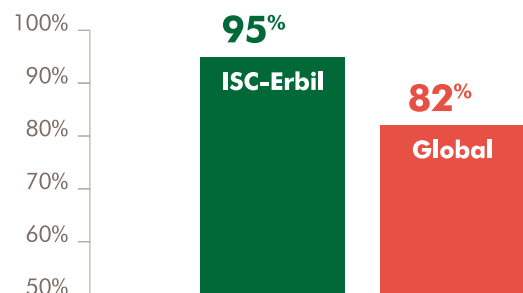
The SABIS® Educational System™ is an international academic program that has been developed and refined over a 130-year period. Based on a well-structured curriculum, frequent testing to make sure that students are actually learning, effective teaching methods, and continuous follow-up and support, the SABIS® Educational System™

has proven its success, time and again, in helping all students achieve success.

The results speak for themselves. The chart below show **ISC-Erbil** students' 2018 results on British-based IGCSEs and American-based AP® exams as compared to global averages.

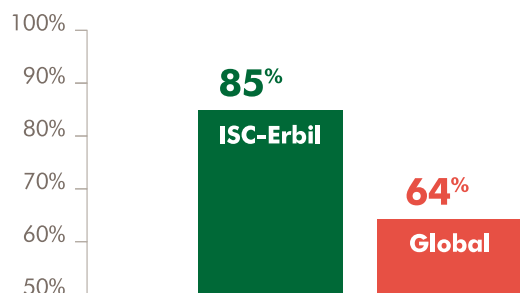
### IGCSE RESULTS 2018

Percentage of Students Scoring A\*-C



### AP® RESULTS 2018

Percentage of Students Scoring 5, 4, or 3



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Education for a changing world.®

## Path to University

**ISC-Erbil** students have a solid track record of acceptances to the world's most prestigious universities including the University of Edinburgh and King's College London in the U.K.; Ivy League universities including Harvard University and Stanford University in the U.S.; in addition to leading universities in Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands. Additionally, seventy-eight of **ISC-Erbil** graduates have gained acceptance to **Hewler Medical University** since 2013. They are currently majoring in general medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy.

## Cutting-Edge Technology

The minute students enter **The International School of Chouefat – Erbil** campus, they are stepping into a well-structured, high-quality educational system. Using modern, up-to-date information technology, every aspect of students' school life is taken into consideration to promote their learning and ensure their academic success. From E-books, to modern Interactive Whiteboards used in the classrooms, software that allows teachers and school administrators instant access to important academic data, and the **SABIS® Digital Platform** which provides students and parents access to details about their school performance, modern information technology infiltrates every aspect of school life to help your children succeed and reach their full potential.

## Campus

**The International School of Chouefat – Erbil** is housed on a new, state-of-the-art campus. The school offers modern classrooms, laboratories for the sciences and IT, a library, and staff accommodation for international members of staff. **ISC-Erbil** also boasts outstanding sports facilities including a semi-Olympic pool, kids' swimming pool, and KG mini gym, a state-of-the-art stadium, a semi-Olympic offering students of all ages countless opportunities to enjoy a wide range of

sports. There is also a large performance hall that can welcome students and parents for school performances and plays.

## Student Life

Beyond academics, **ISC-Erbil** encourages students to lead an active and enriching student life through the **SABIS Student Life Organization® (SLO®)**. By joining the **SLO®**, students make a difference in their school, improve their academic performance, participate in activities they enjoy and excel in, and create a school atmosphere that is conducive to learning. The eight departments: Academics, Discipline, Management, Sports & Health, Activities, Outreach, Social Responsibility, and Lower School ensures that every student can find a way to get involved.

The **SLO®** also offers countless opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, community-based projects that help them develop a strong sense of compassion and community conscientiousness. They learn the importance of giving back and believe in their ability to make a difference in the world.

## Extra-Curricular Activities

**ISC-Erbil** offers students a wide range of extra-curricular activities that allow students to develop talents, interests, hobbies, and skills. Extra-curricular activities on offer include robotics, sports, music, drama, and dance.



To book your campus tour or to find out more about how **The International School of Chouefat in Erbil** prepares your child for success, please contact the school administration:

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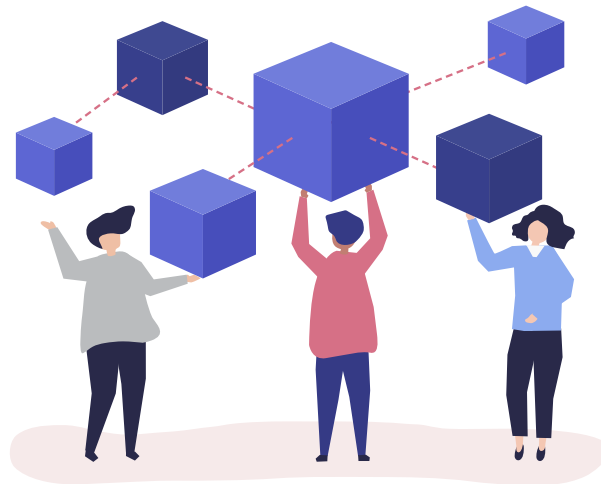
*Abdul Salam Medeni*

Chief Executive Director, Rwanga Foundation

**The Rwanga Foundation officially launched its activities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) in 2013. Rwanga has implemented 203 projects with total of 2.5 million beneficiaries since it was founded. AbdulSalam Medeni, Chief Executive Director of Rwanga Foundation, talks about the Foundation's vision and activities.**



**Our mission is to provide services, build capacities and design policies to ensure easy access to education for all and improve the overall educational standards in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the greater global community.**



## What is the vision and strategic goal of the Rwanga Foundation?

We at Rwanga Foundation envisage a world where high-quality education is accessible to all. Our mission is to provide services, build capacities and design policies to ensure easy access to education for all and improve the overall educational standards in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the greater global community.

Rwanga's strategic goals are to develop platforms for youth to discover talents and fulfill their potential, introduce the latest technology, including e-learning system to the education process in order to meet advanced international standards, and create a culture and passion for learning in particular among youth.

**Overall, we have implemented 35 projects in total, with nearly half a million beneficiaries in 2019.**



## What key projects did Rwanga finalize in 2019?

Overall, we have implemented 35 projects in total, with nearly half a million beneficiaries in 2019.

We have renovated 516 drinking water reservoirs, planted 500 seedlings and trees, and launched over 20 environmental awareness campaigns.

Nearly 100 schools have been renovated and provided with the necessary school equipment in 2019.

We printed 15,000 copies for grades 9 and 12 students, and also produced more than 50 video lessons of English, chemistry, physics, and mathematics for 12th grade students.

Through the Rwanga-Foras project, we have published 5,000 job vacancies, more than 800 people were employed during 2019.

We delivered 208 training courses and 80 capacity-building trainings for youth. About 100 vocational trainings, eight English-language and computer skills trainings, and 20 trainings for company employees have been conducted last year. Trainings were delivered to more than 3,420 people including 1,700 jobseekers, and 300 company employees and 1,520 youth.

## Which key projects are you currently working on?

Currently, we are carrying out several projects in providing livelihood supports, capacity-building, youth competition and raising awareness.

### EU-MADAD

Funded by EU-MADAD, we implement the "Employment Creation Grant Scheme" project which aims to increase the self-reliance of Syrian refugees, vulnerable host communities and internally displaced people (IDPs). The project is to improve employability and generate jobs, mainly for youth and women.

### Rwanga Annual Awards

Our Rwanga Awards project strives to discover talents, to strengthen confidence and to collect all types of artistic, literary, and scientific projects created and developed throughout the KRI.

### Video Guide & Qutabkhana Application

The University Video Guide and Qutabkhana Application are the two projects under the education sector that we are currently carrying out.

The projects provide educational support for students in terms of providing clear guidance in selecting a field of study at university, and also providing access to school lessons through a mobile application

## What will be the focus in 2021 and beyond?

Envisioning the sustainable development goal through developing capabilities, we have plans to conduct the following projects and activities during 2021:

### Education

- Renovating schools, supporting schools with educational supplies
- Creating opportunities for students to participate in competitions, and supporting and rewarding the talented ones to further pursue their future dreams, such as Mathematic Competition Project and Rwanga Book Project
- Publishing educational programs and videos, mainly in relation to formal but also informal education, through social media and other communication channels



### Vulnerable Groups

- Supporting IDPs and refugees to make them economically independent and self-reliant
- Developing skills among vulnerable groups and supporting the establishment of small businesses, including home-based business projects

### Could you also brief our readers on Rwanga's projects on refugees and IDPs?

Refugees and IDPs have been among our target beneficiaries since 2013. So far, more than 700,000 IDPs and 200,000 refugees have benefited from our activities and projects, especially in terms of educational, livelihood, and social supports.

Rwanga Foundation has always tried to include refugees and IDPs at the top of its list of targeted beneficiaries among with host communities to provide the same support equally, and also to create links among the communities in order to build peace and social cohesion.

In all the vocational training courses and other capacity-building projects, our teams visit camps and encourage refugees and IDPs to participate in the training courses.

One of the outstanding projects that we have been implementing since July 2017 is "Support to Strengthen the Resilience & Self Dependence of IDPs," funded by GIZ. The project is running six community centers in six IDP camps in Duhok governorate, and includes capacity-building, social, legal, and community-based activities and support among the project activities.

### Youth

- Providing vocational training to unemployed youth and to connect young job seekers with job providers to bridge the gap in youth employment
- Providing platforms for youth to take part in events and competitions, whether face-to-face or online, to further develop their skills and motivate other youth to take the path to success
- Creating opportunities and supporting youth involvement in volunteering activities for public benefit

### Environment

- Raising awareness on environmental protection, water conservancy, energy conservation and other environmental concerns through community meetings, social media channels, videos, TV programs, and campaigns

**So far, more than 700,000 IDPs and 200,000 refugees have benefited from our activities and projects, especially in terms of educational, livelihood, and social supports.**

- Participating in activities related to keeping the environment clean in partnership with international and local NGOs as well as relevant government authorities and local communities;

The Focus

# Rwanga Foundation



### Rwanga Annual Awards

The Rwanga Annual Awards strive to discover talent, strengthen confidence, and bring together artistic, literary, and scientific projects from across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. All projects – related to the specific fields of short stories and films, recycled art, scientific innovation, entrepreneurship, solo music, photography, poetry, and software development – are submitted by youth from all over the KRI (including refugees and internally displaced people) aged between 15 and 25 years.

### Rwanga Mathematics Competition

The Rwanga Foundation's Mathematics Competition aims to increase the students' drive to engage with mathematics. 196 tenth-grade students participated the Rwanga's 2019 Mathematics Competition. Five students were selected for the final round of the competition.

### Rwanga Foras International Job Fair

The Rwanga Foras International Job Fair connects job seekers with employers and establishes channels of communication for the benefit of both. It is a unique networking opportunity for employers and recruiters from various sectors – including private, public, and non-profit local and international organizations – to gather under one roof to meet and engage with prospective job seekers.

### Rwanga Book Project

Rwanga Foundation's Annual Book Project aims to encourage authors to write educational short stories for children related to the themes of Kurdish culture and heritage, innovation, the future, and daily life.



The Snapshot: Higher Education

# Preparing for the Future

**In order to prepare tomorrow's workforce, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is prioritizing quality assurance and arranging its higher education based on the skills required for the development and diversification of the economy.**



The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) puts great focus on its higher education sector by advancing it from a traditional model that relies on instruction-based rote learning to incorporate Western-style teaching methods that emphasize critical thinking and give students more freedom of choice in their academic pursuits.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has recognized the need to better tailor higher education in both universities and technical institutes to the skillsets demanded by local and international firms operating in the KRI. Thus, the KRG Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) is implementing guidelines to offer quality in higher education across the KRI, and teaming up with key players in the regional economy to ensure that new graduates have the skillsets and experience to succeed in the local workplace. In accordance with this strategy, the MoHE has established a number of tertiary institutions dedicated to technical and vocational education and training. The Ministry runs two-year courses at technical institutes and four-year courses at technical colleges across Kurdistan that are managed by three polytechnic universities.

**As many as 19 new universities have been founded in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in the last 15 years. Today, there are 26 universities in the KRI. This confirms the KRG's commitment to investing in its human capital.**

## Quality Assurance Plan

While supporting an increasing range of choices that the proliferation of private institutions has helped create for students, KRG education officials are keen to point out that their support is dependent on those institutions meeting government standards. The Ministry's strategy is to prevent higher education from becoming commercialized. The Ministry has weighed applications for new private universities against the key metrics of a quality-assurance plan for higher education that was adopted in 2011, approving just three out of the 18 proposals for new private universities it has received since then.

**The KRI is prioritizing quality assurance and identifying key sectors of the future to prepare tomorrow's workforce.**

These higher education quality assurance procedures focus on curriculum reform, increased autonomy for universities and technical institutions, programs offering staff the chance for continuous professional development, and the promotion of research. The strategy also establishes a system for evaluating teaching methods, course materials, exam design, and lecture styles in parallel with a planned accreditation system to ensure that institutes, colleges, and universities conform to the highest academic standards.

## Human Capacity Development Program

The KRG has founded the Human Capacity Development Program, which seeks to cultivate professional skills and leadership abilities among students from the KRI by giving them the opportunity to earn a degree abroad. Until now, the program has given over 5,000 of Kurdistan's most talented students the opportunity to study abroad with the help of government-sponsored scholarships. Over 1,000 of those students finished their foreign academic pursuits and returned to join Kurdistan's labor force. Scholarship recipients also benefit from language tuition at centers set up by the MoHE in anticipation of their overseas studies. The KRG has spent over \$100 million on the Human Capacity Development Program and plans to expand it in the years ahead.

**A growing number of universities in the KRI are strengthening their ties with their counterparts abroad, and offer a growing number of courses in English in an effort to expand opportunities for their students and benefit from international expertise.**

## Projecting future trends

There is an emerging movement to connect employers with higher education intuitions across the KRI. One initiative is annual career events, where organizers have been advising job seekers on the importance of internships and connecting local and international companies interested in hosting interns with workers and students looking to gain experience.



# University of Kurdistan Hewlêr

**The University of Kurdistan Hewlêr opened its doors in 2006 as the first and only English-medium public-private university in Iraq.**

The University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH) is the realization of HE Nechirvan Barzani's vision. Over the years, as its founder and the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), President Barzani has been the UKH's main supporter. Thanks to his commitment, the UKH has been providing equal opportunity to all prospective students.

The university currently offers a wide variety of degrees in both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in medical sciences, social sciences, engineering, and business administration. Since its establishment in 2006, UKH has awarded 1,280 undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the fields of business administration, natural resource engineering, information technology, computer engineering, sociology, and politics and international relations.

The UKH is the first English-medium public-private university in Iraq. The university is renowned for its student life, with an abundance of annual cultural events, social activities, and student-centered recreation. This environment allows students, in addition to their studies, to realize their true potential by sharing ideas, practicing what they learn, and initiating projects independently. UKH places equal emphasis on critical and creative thinking, team building, and leadership qualities.

## Alumni

The UKH alumni have built bridges between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the rest of the world. The alumni are actively engaged in the developmental processes in the KRI. According to research conducted by the UKH Alumni Association, the employment rate among its alumni is as high as 99%. Hence, its alumni are the social capital that the KRI most urgently needs.

**The teaching staff thrives on teaching students critical thinking, practical skills, and work discipline that are deemed essential to their future careers.**

The UKH academic faculty includes accomplished and internationally renowned academics. The faculty come from different cultural backgrounds. This has given the UKH a unique atmosphere of celebrating differences. The teaching staff thrives on teaching students critical thinking, practical skills, and work discipline that are deemed essential to their future careers. The university prepares students for leading roles in government, business, and civil society. UKH encourages students to think; it fosters freedom of thought.

## Accreditation

In addition to official accreditation by the KRG's Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, UKH has also received accreditation by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Federal Government of Iraq since early 2020. Internationally, the Accreditation Service for International Schools, Colleges, and Universities (ASIC) has accredited UKH. The university has earned Premier status with the ASIC for its conduct and operation.

**Internationally, the Accreditation Service for International Schools, Colleges, and Universities (ASIC) accredited the UKH. The university has earned Premier status with ASIC for its conduct and operation.**



**The University of Kurdistan Hewler topped the list of Kurdistan university rankings for being the best in research, job creation for its alumni, and international activities in 2018 and 2019 respectively, as well as having the best library.**







**Idris Nechirvan Barzani, the Chancellor of the UKH, giving a commencement speech to 2019 graduating students.**

### Student Life

Student life at UKH is full of exciting events. Each academic year, local and international events enrich students' learning experiences. Extracurricular activities, cultural and educational exchange programs, conferences, seminars, symposiums, spring festivals, national commemorations, and sports tournaments have become part of student life at UKH.

**According to research conducted by the UKH Alumni Association, the employment rate among its alumni is as high as 99%.**



### Center for Regional and International Studies (CRIS)

CRIS fosters research initiatives. It aims to secure research funding to benefit the region and to raise UKH's profile within the international academic research community. Each academic year, the center holds international and regional conferences. It offers rigorous policy recommendations to different stakeholders on national, regional, and pressing global issues.

**UKH's CRIS offers rigorous policy recommendations to different stakeholders on national, regional, and pressing global issues.**



### Centre on Culture, History, and Humanities for Sustainable Development (CCHH)

CCHH, as a part of the Nahrein Network, is a collaborative project between UKH, University College London (UCL), and the University of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum. Based in UKH, CCHH aims to promote the sustainable development of archaeological findings, cultural heritage, and humanities in Iraq, Kurdistan, and the neighboring countries.



# Kurdistan's human capital

Haller Miran  
CEO, MSELECT

## Haller Miran on the state of human capital in Kurdistan, recruiting industry trends, and MSelect's key initiatives.



**If we compare the state of Kurdistan today to what it was just a few years ago, it is plain to see we have made impressive progress. There are more education options, more jobs, salaries are higher, and employers have to try harder to attract talent.**

### How would you assess the state of human capital in Kurdistan?

Every country has its struggles, and we have had our fair share. Over the last few years, we have battled with conflicts and recessions, to name a few.

However, we have made leaps and bounds of progress in human capital. Unemployment, for example, has dropped from 14% in 2016 to 10% in 2019 (according to the KRSO), lower than all our neighbouring countries, which is an incredible achievement.

We have also transformed our education system from an outdated model that wasn't preparing students for the workplace sufficiently, to a new and more effective approach.

In the last 18 months, the government has added much-needed practical TEVT programs that were previously missing from our education system. It is also working closely with the private sector and international development agencies to promote and incentivise internships.

In the past, we lacked communication and collaboration between government, local businesses, and

our education systems in the area of skill development, which has since drastically improved.

If we compare the state of Kurdistan today to what it was just a few years ago, it is plain to see we have made impressive progress. There are more education options, more jobs, salaries are higher, and employers have to try harder to attract talent.

Even many in the diaspora, who left due to the downturn in the economy from 2014 – 2017, are now applying for local jobs. This is an indication that they want to return to Kurdistan and rebuild their lives here.

**Unemployment, for example, has dropped from 14% in 2016 to 10% in 2019 (according to the KRSO), lower than all our neighbouring countries, which is an incredible achievement.**

### What has the Kurdistan Regional Government been doing to improve human capital?

We have seen many positive changes in recent years, and we are now seeing excellent support from the government in these areas.

For example, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) implemented a localisation program designed to transfer skills from experienced expatriate staff to local nationals in the Kurdistan region.

The MNR program aims to meet the demands for a skilled workforce with training, enforced immigration control, and a reduction of the number of jobs going to lesser-skilled expatriate workers.

The localisation program has been working well since its inception, and we now have a strong base of local workers in the oil & gas industry.

We have noticed that the oil & gas companies we work with are taking the matter seriously and investing in training the local workforce to suit their needs, rather than hiring expatriates.

As a result, we at MSELECT have been meeting the demand by adding to our courses and delivering training on-site, at our head office, and abroad.

The KRG is also taking responsibility for educating and training the unemployed, with more initiatives such as apprenticeships, internships, and national training centres on the horizon.

**At MSELECT, we train, recruit, and develop talent in Kurdistan. We have grown to become the leader in the staffing industry not only in Kurdistan but throughout Iraq, with three offices in country as well as three offices abroad.**



### Is the private sector in Kurdistan supporting the government's efforts?

Yes, there are companies in the private sector that are stepping in to support the government's efforts to solve the challenges we're facing in job creation, education, and training.

For example, at MSELECT, we train, recruit, and develop talent in Kurdistan. We have grown to become the leader in the staffing industry not only in Kurdistan but throughout Iraq, with three offices in country as well as three offices abroad.

Our success and rapid growth are a direct result of the quality of our recruitment, outsourcing, payroll, HR consulting, training, and development services.

In Kurdistan, we have used our position to invest heavily in adding internationally certified programs to our MSELECT Academy catalogue. For example, there is a strong demand for health & safety certification, which is why we now deliver courses from IOSH and OSHA.

These internationally designed and certified programs allow us to offer world-class training to local people so they can improve their skills, increase their value to employers, and be more productive in the workplace.

We have also recently partnered with the KRG's Ministry of Labour to develop new locally accredited vocational training programs.

### What other initiatives in Kurdistan are you a part of?

The success of MSELECT has also allowed us to invest in initiatives to create an ecosystem of businesses that support the local Kurdish community.

In 2017, we launched TechHub, the country's first co-working hub, at our MSELECT facility. It is designed to support start-ups by providing the network, community, and resources they need to thrive.

We also host an online newsletter, "Bite.Tech," where we discuss start-up and tech news in Iraq and feature local start-ups. Our mission is to promote and grow the local entrepreneurial scene and providing a platform for start-ups to share what they're working on.

Another exciting initiative we're a part of is Orange Corners Erbil. It is a program funded by the Dutch government to develop, mentor, and support start-ups with a focus on hydro and agriculture. We were recently chosen to manage their project in Kurdistan, and are running the initiative from TechHub.

**Another exciting initiative we're a part of is Orange Corners Erbil. It is a program funded by the Dutch government to develop, mentor, and support start-ups with a focus on hydro and agriculture. We were recently chosen to manage their project in Kurdistan, and are running the initiative from TechHub.**



1

At MSELECT, international corporations often approach us when they need development plans for their staff. In these cases, we tailor solutions based on their needs, which can include anything from health & safety training to IT technical development.

For example, we recently managed a literacy program for one of our oil & gas clients who wanted to develop their rural Kurdish staff's Arabic and Kurdish competence.

After six months of the program, we managed to transform these individuals into proficient Arabic and Kurdish readers and writers.

As you can imagine, this has had an enormous impact on the productivity, efficiency, and potential of our client's personnel.

In 2019, the MSELECT Academy was also involved in an initiative to train 40 recent graduates in the foundation of health and safety over 4 weeks.

The effort offered a free HSE training program sponsored by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) in partnership with the KRG's Ministry of Planning and the Kurdistan Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries.



2

The goal of the training was to provide students with the skills needed to position themselves better and gain employment as HSE professionals, predominantly in the oil & gas and power industries.

In Mosul, we also hosted a motivational and team building program sponsored by the GIZ to improve the Ministry of Labour's human and organisational capacity to address social and economic challenges.

### What future trends do you see coming in the recruiting industry in Kurdistan?

The recruiting landscape in Kurdistan has evolved over the last decade and is moving away from a predominantly government workforce to a private-sector economy. This shift will change the skills that are in demand in Kurdistan.

Sales & marketing, IT, manufacturing, and finance are the functions where I predict high demand soon. As things are now, we are facing severe shortages of skilled talent in these areas in Kurdistan.

Our educators and training institutes will play a vital role in the future of talent in these areas and determine whether the shortage worsens, or we take advantage of the growth and fill positions as needed.

**The recruiting landscape in Kurdistan has evolved over the last decade and is moving away from a predominantly government workforce to a private-sector economy. This shift will change the skills that are in demand in Kurdistan.**

Another major trend is in the transition from word of mouth to recruitment agencies and job sites. Back in 2012, most recruiting was done by word of mouth, yet we're now seeing significant demand from local employers who want to source talent from agencies and job websites.



3

### What industries will become key employers?

In my opinion, agriculture is an industry that needs more attention in Kurdistan. It is the biggest employer globally, yet in Kurdistan, it is an underdeveloped sector.

History has shown that investing in agriculture can transform a nation. The massive spike in economic growth and employment during the Industrial Revolution in 19th-century Europe was a direct result of their development of agriculture.

It is no coincidence that the Orange Corners Erbil program is focused on supporting start-ups in the agriculture sector. After all, the Dutch government are the global leaders in this sector.

- 1 Students from Isik University visiting the MSELECT Centre for career coaching
- 2 Opening ceremony of Orange Corners Erbil at TechHub
- 3 IOSH Managing Safety in Erbil by MSELECT Academy

# Train, recruit, and develop talent in Kurdistan.



## What trends do you see in youth employment in Kurdistan?

We have a young workforce eager to work in good jobs. Today, almost 1.2 million people aged 15 years or older are in the labour force, meaning they either have some form of work or are actively seeking work. This is about 40 percent of the population aged 15 years or older.

The population of our region is very young, with about 50 percent of residents aged 20 years old or younger. Studies have projected that in the next 20 years, there will be a significant shift in demographics and an increase in youth workers in our local labour force.

Capitalising on the gig economy and the flexible, reliable freelance work it provides could help provide jobs for tech-savvy and skilled youth in Kurdistan.

This concept is already massively successful around the world, but not yet in Kurdistan. Currently, the labour laws in Kurdistan are restrictive in terms of schedule and temp work and don't provide flexible options to employees or the employers.

We recently launched StaffPlace, a gig hiring app for temp and short-term work, to meet the growing demand for such a platform.

Overall, we need to see a continued commitment to value young people from the government and educators in Kurdistan if we want to best support their needs and maximise their value.

**The population of our region is very young, with about 50 percent of residents aged 20 years old or younger. Studies have projected that in the next 20 years, there will be a significant shift in demographics and an increase in youth workers in our local labour force.**

## How can we better utilise women in the Kurdish workforce?

I'm a firm believer in the importance of diversity and the need to get past old taboos and cultural limitations.

Women are valuable workplace assets that are often overlooked in developing countries; however, great strides have been made in Kurdistan.

At MSELECT, many of our international clients comment positively on the diversity of candidates applying for roles.

Of those females in jobs, 80% are in government positions. I think we should focus on transitioning many of these educated, skilled women into private sector roles that would potentially be a more productive use of their talent.

If we want to have a strong economy and resolve our skill shortage, we need to get more women in the workforce and provide better training.

I read somewhere that our female unemployment rate is similar to that of Turkey, which is an excellent achievement. However, we need to continue to improve our position by preparing more women for the workforce, particularly in the private sector.

We need to encourage and support women by ensuring employers provide safe transport to and from work, more reasonable working hours, and remote working and eLearning opportunities. All of which have been noticeably improving in our region.

**The Kurdish people have an unwavering desire to learn, improve, and grow their skills and value in the workplace. What's remarkable is that despite the setbacks we have faced in the region, the quality, professionalism, and motivation of our people remain.**

## How would you define the character of the Kurdish people?

The Kurdish people have an unwavering desire to learn, improve, and grow their skills and value in the workplace. What's remarkable is that despite the setbacks we have faced in the region, the quality, professionalism, and motivation of our people remain.

This transcendent optimism is what has driven and will continue to drive rapid growth in Kurdistan. Many of the businesses we provide Kurdish staff for are pleasantly surprised by the quality of the local talent pool.

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# Young leaders who shine at the global level



A great increase has been observed among Kurdish youth in the number of sectors across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in recent years. In reality, branding the Kurdistan Region of Iraq belongs to all Kurdistanis, but especially the Kurdish youth — the true promoters of the Kurdistan brand. In recent years, young leaders have begun making an impact in health, business, media, and environmental sustainability.

**Young leaders play a crucial role in putting Kurdistan's image in the right direction.**



## Iman Ibrahim

**Iman Ibrahim is medical student at the Hawler Medical University. She was awarded a bronze medal at the International Environment Sustainability Project Olympiad in 2014 with her partner for their bomb detection system project when she was 17 years old.**

Iman's journey in science and technology began when she participated in the Iraqi National Project Olympiad under the theme of "Future Inventors Science Fair" when she was a 16-year-old high school student.

In 2014, a bomb exploded in front of the ministry of interior in Erbil. On that day, Iman and her project partner decided to develop a 100% locally made bomb detection system.

Their initial hopes of designing a new bomb detector were dashed when they were told the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) didn't have labs capable of developing such sophisticated technology. Instead of giving up, they shifted their focus.

Iman and her project partner set up a model whereby two bomb detector devices are hidden in trash cans on the side of a road, and one is affixed to a street sign above.

When cars slow down over a speed bump, they are scanned by all three devices. It was estimated that one system alone could process up to 64,000 cars a day.

The project won a golden medal at the National Science fair in 2014. They were invited to attend the International Environment Sustainability Project Olympiad; an international competition held in June 2014 at the Hague and were awarded a bronze medal.

At the science fair, twenty-one companies approached them about using their system. They refused all offers from companies, promising that they would offer it to their own government first, free of charge as their main purpose was to save people's lives. However, their innovative idea has not been implemented. They could not copyright their system and a month after news agencies published stories about the project, their idea was stolen by a foreign company.



### Global Shapers' Erbil hub

Iman was selected as the curator of the Global Shaper's Erbil hub between 2017 and 2018. She expanded Erbil hub's projects and strengthened ties with a number of national and international organizations.

Under her leadership, Global Shapers - Erbil Hub was selected as one of the most active hubs among 371 others worldwide by the World Economic Forum (WEF) CEO Professor Klaus Schwab. Mr. Schwab expressed his admiration and awarded a grant for Erbil hub's sustainable projects quoting "one of our most active hubs in a fractured part of the world". Then-PM Nechirvan Barzani met with the Erbil Shapers in 2018 to praise their activities and hard work in the KRI.

### Creativity Beyond Curriculum

Iman is also the Founder of the Creativity Beyond Curriculum (CBC) research and innovation platform. The platform works to provide educational resources and facilities to students and unemployed young people, and to encourage young girls to participate in STEM-related fields in Iraq. CBC brings investors into contact with young people with ideas. CBC provides hands on training programs aimed at developing young critical thinkers and creating a solid base for the R&D sector.

CBC targets two age groups: high school students and university students. CBC organizes training sessions aimed at upskilling, reskilling and critical thinking. By doing this, CBC gathers groups of youth in research and innovation, later providing them with facilities to innovate.

Iman's long-term plan is to open a Research and Innovation Center in Kurdistan for local youth providing year-long training programs, supervision, and lab equipment. Following the training, innovators will showcase their projects, attract local and international investors, and build partnerships to further their ideas.

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### World Economic Forum

Iman was invited to the WEF's Dead Sea Forum in April 2019 and was one of the youngest panelists to speak at the WEF event. She spoke at a panel discussion entitled "Shaking Up the Middle East". As the Founder of the Creativity Beyond Curriculum research and innovation platform, she gave a speech on the education system in Iraq and how CBC seeks to introduce ways to help people upskill and reskill, improve their critical thinking, and gain access to innovative learning methods.

### Vision

Iman seeks to become a successful physician to provide support to patients in need. Alongside this, she aims to continue to help empowering young people to innovate and wants to open a Research and Innovation Center dedicated to youth that provides them with access to sophisticated technology. Iman says "This center was a dream for me to visit when I was 16, if I could not have one, why not create one for the next generation?"



## Zinah Mohammed

Zinah Mohammed is a human rights lawyer. She holds an LLM Master of Law from the UK, and has experience in humanitarian policy and advocacy in Iraq, particularly around children's rights in the post-ISIS era.

Zinah is also the Advocacy and Campaigns Coordinator of Save the Children International where her main focus is serving Iraqi children who have suffered as a result of the ISIS conflict in Iraq.

She has over six years' experience in voluntary work, ranging from activism, emergency aid campaigning and youth inclusion, both locally and globally. Zinah is currently the Curator of the Global Shaper's Erbil hub for 2019-2020.

### Let's Be Friends

Zinah founded the project "Let's Be Friends" which twins schools in Iraq and the UK to build bridges of peace, coexistence and cultural understanding among children, using art as a means of self-expression.

Let's Be Friend project emerged from her experience while studying for her masters in the UK. The project is

part of Zinah's work with the Prince's Trust International Leadership program, where she is one of 54 international delegates chosen from a pool of 10,000 applicants globally. The delegates are chosen based on their potential to make positive changes in their communities.

**The whole idea is to build a peaceful connection that children wouldn't usually have access to. It is just one way of teaching them how similar we all are and reminds us all of the value of dialogue and co-existence.**

Zinah shares with children her story about how war changed her life, but how, as someone who witnessed three wars before the age of 30, it never stopped her from dreaming big and achieving her ambitions.

Zinah believes that if we can educate people about the power of dialogue and tolerance then we can make a real difference in the world.

The Let's Be Friends project has attracted the attention of many schools in the UK, Netherlands and Norway, which seek to connect their pupils with children living in camps. The project has also been featured on the BBC.



## Bijar Aziz

Bijar Aziz is the vice curator at Global Shapers Community-Erbil Hub for 2019-2020.

He is studying at Hawler Medical University.

During his time at high school and subsequently at college, Bijar Aziz has enjoyed great success in his extracurricular activities. He has participated in many national and international science and technology competitions and has won several awards.

Bijar's allelopathy project, designed to serve his community, won first place in the Iraqi National Project Olympiad in January 2012. He has also shown impeccable command of a broad array of subjects. Bijar won a bronze medal and third place among 67 countries in the International Sustainable World Energy, Engineering and Environment Project Olympiad (ISWEEEP) which was held in Houston, Texas USA in May 2012.



**Bijar won a bronze medal and third place among 67 countries in the International Sustainable World Energy, Engineering and Environment Project Olympiad (ISWEEEP) which was held in Houston, Texas USA in May 2012.**

At the age of only 16, he gave a speech at the TEDx Erbil 2012 Conference, and was an excellent way for him to share his allelopathy project idea with the world.

Bijar successfully completed high school, finishing among the top 3% in his school, and earned a place at the College of Medicine, Hawler Medical University. While in his first year of college, he started volunteering for the International Federation of Medical Students Association (IFMSA-Kurdistan) - a startup to develop public health awareness. In his four years working for this federation, he has led projects such as the World Health Day Festival and World Diabetes Day.

In 2016, Bijar joined the Erbil Hub of the Global Shapers Community, an initiative launched by the World Economic Forum (WEF). Under the Global Shapers' Erbil hub, he has eagerly put his efforts into the Hawler Cancer Support Center which is one of the first centers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for social and psychological support for cancer patients.

In July 2018, Bijar was selected to take part in the Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP) for undergraduate students. This is a four-week, fully funded leadership training program for talented and dedicated students from all over Iraq.





## Basima Abdulrahman

Basima Abdulrahman, a climate trailblazer, is passionately working on green building projects in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Basima, a World Economic Forum Foundation Board member and cultural leader, has been invited to Davos, UNESCO and various international events as a speaker. She was featured as a Young Leader by TIME magazine in 2019 and a Visionary Leader by 100 Real Leaders magazine in 2018.

After completing her MSc in structural engineering at Auburn University in the US, Basima attended a program to study rating systems for green buildings. She was accredited by the US Green Building Council to certify, design and retrofit buildings to meet the criteria of their rating system.

After moving to Erbil in 2017, Basima founded KESK, the only consulting and design company dedicated to green building in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). KESK provides services for certification systems, compliance verification, designing, constructing, and operating a green building.

KESK has recently concluded a recycling project in Erbil and is also currently partnering with the UN Habitat to



turn a damaged building into a green building in Mosul. Implementing solar energy projects along with training courses have been under the company's main activities in the past two years. The company is also in talks with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to collaborate on green building projects in the KRI.

Green construction is new in the Kurdish market. Slowly but surely, she foresees, the adoption of green building practices will gather momentum in the KRI. "Everything here is supportive for the implementation, and the process of such types of initiatives," she says, adding that there are many initiatives coming from the KRG to protect the environment.

She expects that once there is a policy by which buildings should meet minimum sustainability standards, people will understand the long-term financial benefits of green buildings: significantly reducing water and energy consumption.



## We need to discuss the challenges and opportunities in securing a more sustainable future in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Basima is at the forefront of creating awareness and driving dialog on sustainable development in the KRI. However, she believes large-scale workshops and seminars that bring people from different professions are needed in order to drive a concrete action plan. This will promote

environmental sustainability across the KRI, and enable policymakers to understand what people envision for the future of their city and how their struggles will be addressed in securing a more sustainable future.

Working on sustainability projects, she sees, is part of her responsibility. "I had the opportunity to live in any developed country. But I decided with my whole self that I want to be here. I feel like I need to," she says.

Basima would like to see sustainable policies and a long-term vision for Kurdistan to have a resilient future. Her ultimate goal is to build a green city in the KRI in the next 10 years. "When I travel anywhere in the world, I feel like we can do this. We have the potential. There is so much to do here, we have this canvas, we can build something beautiful here."





The Focus: Environment

# Green Kurdistan

*Dr. Hallo Askari*

Former Head of Kurdistan Environmental Protection and Improvement Board

**Dr. Hallo Askari on the Environment Board's objectives for reducing air pollution and excessive use of plastics, and creating awareness about the environmental protection in the KRI.**



**To mitigate the impact on the quality of air, the Board has outlined an ambitious and achievable program encompassing legislature, cooperation with industry and wider society, campaigning and awareness raising, as well as education and training.**

## On the Board's main objectives in terms for reducing air pollution

The quality of Kurdistan's air is becoming increasingly more polluted due to several pollution sources:

- The increase in the number of cars, with 1.6 million cars now in active use in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)
- The large numbers of private petrochemical electricity generators in the city due to the insufficient public electricity supply. Currently, there are approximately 4,500 generators in use, most of which run for prolonged periods during the day
- The widespread use of petrochemical (mainly gasoline) based power plants and electricity generation stations
- Gas flares from the oil and gas industry

To mitigate the impact on the quality of air, the Board has outlined an ambitious and achievable program encompassing legislature, cooperation with industry and wider society, campaigning and awareness raising, as well as education and training. We have now drawn up a strong strategic plan, its main objectives are:

- Increasing awareness within society, specifically with respect to air quality
- Encouraging individuals to reduce their personal car usage, especially for short distance journeys
- Encouraging business to import environmentally friendly cars
- Recommending other alternative forms of transportation like trains and buses
- Using dedicated filters to reduce air pollution and gas flares
- Offering taxation exemptions on imports of eco-friendly cars and bicycles

- Improving the environmental laws and regulations to meet international standards
- Drawing up new strategies to improve the process of monitoring and examination
- Using new technology to analyze samples, and conduct examination and monitoring
- Providing training for our employees across a variety of fields
- Working to eliminate the burning of waste outside of the cities
- Encouraging the use of renewable energy over oil and gas
- Prohibiting the importing of certain gases used in heating and cooling systems that have a negative impact on air quality
- Collaborating better with the Ministry of Natural Resources to improve the quality of fuel, especially petrol and gasoline
- Supporting and improving our Board's laboratories by providing them with better equipment for monitoring air quality
- Strengthening our relationship with international NGOs and governmental agencies to share information and learn from their experiences. Currently, our board is on a mission to amend the air quality regulation whilst simultaneously undertaking a project to monitor air quality in the region and find scientific solutions to improve it

## On the Board's main objectives in terms of reducing the excessive use of plastics

Currently in the KRI, plastic bags, bottles, food and clothing packaging, and household goods are largely made from non-biodegradable plastics and their use is endemic. Unfortunately, there is currently little recycling of these materials and they are disposed off in landfills or by burning.

The people of Kurdistan are part of their environment and individuals may over-use plastics in their daily lives. Our Board strives to:

- Raise awareness about the negative impacts of plastic usage on health
- Set limits on the importing of certain plastic materials
- Replace plastic with environmentally friendly alternatives
- Encourage the public to minimize the use of disposable plastics
- Increase taxes on imported plastic to discourage its use when other alternatives are available
- Introduce regulations to reduce the use of disposable plastic in the region. Two projects are currently underway aimed at reducing plastic pollution:
  1. Recycling plastic water bottles
  2. Reducing and banning the usage of disposable plastic bags by 2025



### Two projects are currently underway aimed at reducing plastic pollution:

- » **Recycling plastic water bottles**
- » **Reducing and banning the usage of disposable plastic bags by 2025**

### On the Board's activities in creating awareness about environmental protection among the public and relevant authorities

The Environment Board has gone to a lot of effort to raise public awareness, through:

- Building strong relations with other governmental organizations and ministries, especially working with the Ministry of Education to include environmental awareness in the school curriculum
- Engaging with schools, we created a mascot called 'Zheenora' to help positively influence children to save the environment

- Working with the Ministry of Electricity, to find environmentally friendly alternatives to replace the current sources of electricity production i.e. wind, water and solar energy systems
- Meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources to:
  1. Encourage farmers to use novel methods and technologies when tilling the land and planting in order to minimize water use
  2. Reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides in agricultural activities
  3. Build small dams to store and save rainfall water
- Working together with the Ministry of Municipality and Tourism to construct more drinking water refineries and water treatment plants
- Discussing with the Ministry of Natural Resources to find ways to protect the natural resources of Kurdistan and reduce the environmentally negative impacts of oil production processes such as exploration, drilling, refining and transportation
- Building relations with Environmental NGOs within the region, involving them in discussions and sharing ideas regarding environmental issues and solutions.
- Connecting with cultural, social and civil organizations such as youth, women, and special needs organizations, to promote environmental awareness among them.

### On the Board's environmental campaigns

The Environment Board will continue to run campaigns to raise societal awareness of environmental issues, particularly by demonstrating the negative impacts of environment pollution on human health, animals and other components of the natural environment. Recently, we ran a big campaign for the Kurdistan Environment Day. Soon, we are going to run more campaigns for a variety of projects, the primary one will be for the reduction in the use and where possible, ban of disposable plastic bags.

### On the KRG's vision to achieve global standards in environmental protection

The Environment Board has prepared several drafts for the amendment of existing regulations such as an amendment to the regulations on air quality and to introduce new



regulations for environment fund. The Board is in good communication with the Ministry of Environment of Iraq, participating in the process of decision making, planning, prioritizing the environmental issues in the country. We send representatives to international meetings and conferences as well.

### On the KRI's long-term potential in terms of renewable energy

Due to its geography and climate, the KRI would benefit from renewable energy sources especially the application of solar energy systems, as the KRI enjoys long hours of sunshine during the summer. There are a number of small projects started by local people and investors around solar energy, but they need more support to get off the ground, which sadly, the events of the past few years have prevented. As the Environment Board, we encourage the use of renewable energies, and we support individuals and companies who are using such technologies. Our Board communicates with the Ministry of Electricity and with the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the KRG to draw more attention to and build more support for the use of renewable energy.

### Our Board communicates with the Ministry of Electricity and with the Ministry of Agriculture to draw more attention to and build more support for the use of renewable energy.



# Joint Crisis Coordination Centre

*Hoshang Mohamad*

Director General of Joint Crisis Coordination Centre

## On the JCC's strategic plans, key projects, and ensuring the rights of IDPs and refugees are upheld in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



**The KRG established the JCC as the lead institution for the coordination, response and management of all phases of crises and disasters.**

### On the purpose of the Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC)

The JCC of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was officially launched on May 17, 2015. The KRG established the JCC as the lead institution for the coordination, response and management of all phases of crises and disasters. The JCC was established in response to the current humanitarian and displacement crisis, the Syrian civil war, and the war against ISIS in Iraq, as well as in anticipation of future man-made and natural disasters.

The JCC has a long-term mandate and is to operate using an all-hazards approach and it is capable of operating 24/7 if needed. It can serve as a communication hub between individual governorates' crisis response offices, ministries, departments, and the international community, as well as with the federal government in Baghdad.

### On the JCC's Strategic Plan

The JCC developed a strategic plan in 2016 to establish a consolidated disaster and crisis management system in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); encompassing legal, institutional, administrative and financial frameworks for effective disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and early recovery through a whole of government approach.

The system will be tailored to the context of the KRI and define mandates for the institutions involved. It will lay out a strategy for related policy making, implementation and accountability. The system will also provide for the development of domestic expertise and best practice, enabling the KRG to predict and prepare for crises and disasters, or reduce their impacts whenever prevention is not feasible. The system will consider crises' effects on people, the economy and the environment.

With the support of the JCC's partners such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Germany Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency (MSB), we have implemented 60% of the JCC's strategic plan, including developing a draft legal framework; laying the foundation of an academy for crisis management capacity building; developing a gender policy; establishing a geographic data system (GIS), data and information management systems; constructing two logistics centers; and establishing an electronic financial management system.

### On the JCC's Key Projects

We are working on several other projects including: establishing rapid response units; developing a volunteer system; developing software for the electronic management of the logistics centers; developing software to allow for the visualization of the threat and risk matrix faced by the KRI; developing an interactive map for humanitarian and displacement crisis management in the KRI; establishing an early warning system for natural and manmade disasters and crises; establishing a humanitarian operations room for crisis response and management.

### On tackling the refugee & IDP crisis in the KRI

The JCC has played a leading role in the response to the displacement and humanitarian crisis in the KRI. The JCC has worked on the operational and strategic level. It has prioritized these areas:

1. Information Management: Collecting, collating and analyzing information through the continuous monitoring, research and follow-up of all crises and humanitarian developments to provide added value information to support decision making and policy formulation.
2. Crisis Response and Management: Leading crisis response and coordinating leadership to enable decision-making on matters of policy, strategy and strategic resource management by presenting options and recommendations based on impact and consequence analysis to ensure a whole of government approach.
3. Coordination and Cooperation: Fostering close coordination among the relevant ministries and departments of the KRG, the federal government, the international community, and non-governmental organizations to implement a joint strategy and plans to ensure concerted efforts towards effective crisis response and emergency management, either manmade or natural.
4. Resource Mobilization: Mobilizing local, national and international resources including financial, technical, material and other forms of assistance and facilitating relief efforts in partnership with local, national and international actors to provide basic services and assistance to displaced people and responding to new emergencies. JCC has been able to establish a strong foundation in this regard and it has developed a structured and institutionalized mechanism for the management of humanitarian crises and natural disasters.

### On ensuring the rights of IDPs and refugees are upheld in the KRI

The JCC works continuously to implement and supervise the KRG's rights-based policy for all the displaced people in the KRI with all its government, local and international partners. This includes ensuring the inclusiveness of the provision of services and assistance to all groups, based on the needs and vulnerability of the IDPs and refugees inside and outside camps. The services and assistance include providing humanitarian assistance, legal support, shelter, job opportunities and livelihood support, education, health care, protection, water and sanitation, electricity, work permits, among others.

We are very proud to say that all IDPs and refugees in the KRI have been treated equally without any discrimination and that they have been provided free and equal access to public services, infrastructure and jobs in the market.

### On providing education to refugees & IDPs

We have provided land for the construction of education spaces and increased the number of shifts in the existing schools by more than two. We have also hired teachers to teach in these schools and educational centers, inside and outside of camps, to increase access to education for displaced children.

### On providing health services to refugees & IDPs

We have granted IDPs and refugees access to public hospitals and health centers free of charge and, even exempted them from the registration fees that apply to local residents. Doctors, nurses and other medical personnel are deployed to the clinics and health centers inside camps to extend medical aid and health services to the camps' population.

### On the infrastructure of the refugee camps

All the camps are either connected to the public electricity grid and water network or generators are set up and water wells drilled to provide them with electricity and clean drinking water. Moreover, new roads are constructed to connect camps with main roads to provide the camp residents with easy access to the cities.

The JCC continues to coordinate and facilitate the voluntary return of displaced people to their place of origin in line with the KRG's return policy, which holds that the return must take place under safe, voluntary and dignified conditions for the displaced populations. This is in alignment with International Humanitarian Law to ensure the safe, sustainable voluntary and principled return of displaced populations.

### On expectations for better support for refugees and IDPs from regional and global partners

The KRG's sudden population increase of 32% has placed it under heavy strain. The yearly cost of the increase is estimated at \$1.4 billion, of which only approximately 25% is covered by the international community through UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations. The remaining 75% is shouldered by the KRG and host communities despite an ongoing financial crisis which has affected the region since 2014.

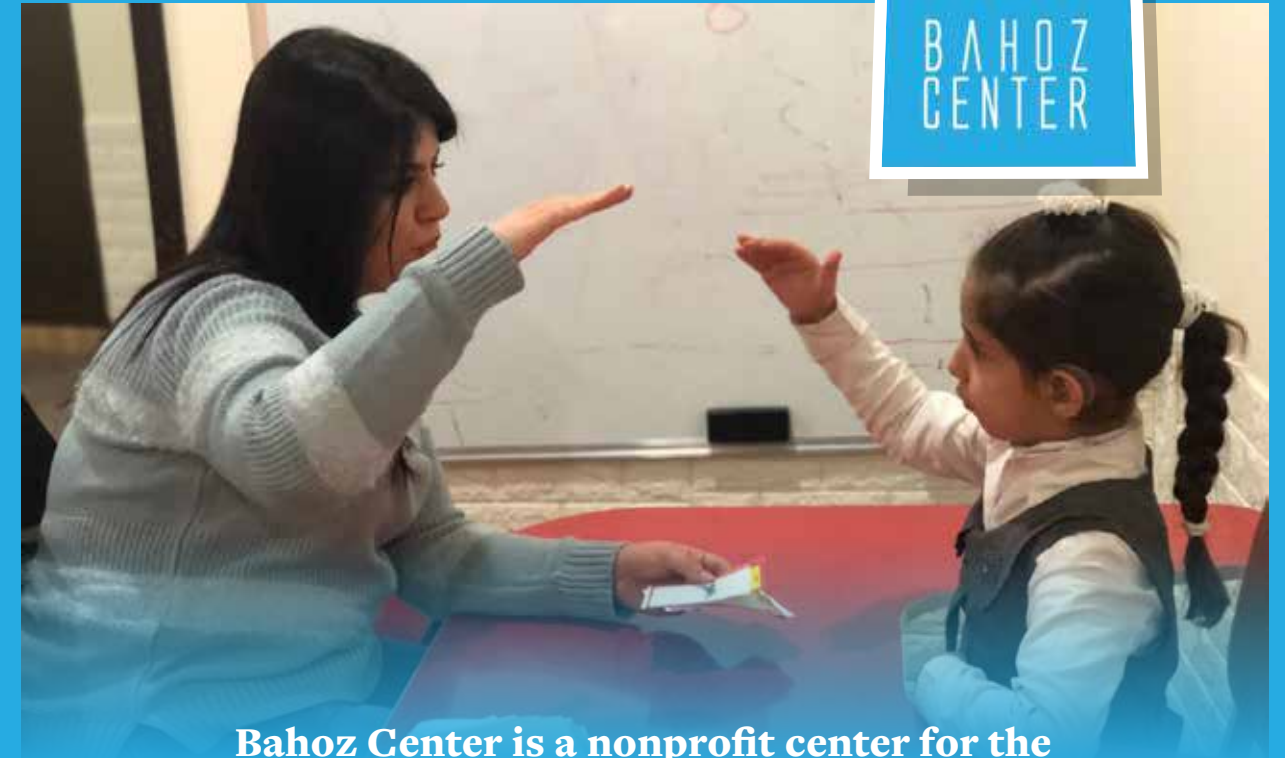
The Kurdistan Region of Iraq spends on its 1.1 million IDPs and refugees around \$1 billion a year. The daily cost to cover the very basic needs of each displaced person amounts to \$2.6 including shelter, security and protection, water and sanitation, electricity, health and education, as well as the administration and management of the camps. We have shared all the services and assistance that we provide to the local population with the displaced people. Since the outbreak of the crisis in 2014, the total cost of the displaced people in the KRI is estimated at \$7.3 billion.

**We are very proud to say that all IDPs and refugees in the KRI have been treated equally without any discrimination and that they have been provided free and equal access to public services, infrastructure and jobs in the market.**



The Focus

# Bahoz Center



**Bahoz Center is a nonprofit center for the rehabilitation of children with special needs.**

## 230 children

**There are currently 230 children receiving treatment in the three departments at Bahoz Center.**

Bahoz Center is a nonprofit center for the rehabilitation of children with special needs. The center was founded by Ali Ibrahim Ali in Erbil in 2015. Ali, who has two children with special needs, established Bahoz Center because there was no rehabilitation center in Erbil and to bring the best available scientific practices to special-needs children and their families in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

There are currently 230 children receiving treatment in the three departments at Bahoz Center.

**Bahoz Center works with charity foundations to aid those who can't afford rehabilitation. The Center has been able to help 70 children through these kinds of donations in the last four years. 250 low-income families, who have registered their children on the waiting list, are waiting for financial help.**



### Physiotherapy

The physiotherapy department treats those with cerebral palsy and other movement challenges with the aim of improving their physical health.

### Speech therapy

The speech therapy department treats patients who have voice disorders, swallowing disorders or delayed speech. It rehabilitates these children

by enhancing their language learning abilities and improving their general level of communication.

### Behavioral therapy

The behavioral therapy department treats patients with autism or ADHD, or who are hyperactive, have Down syndrome or mental disabilities. Over 40% of the children in the center are treated by the behavioral therapy department.

Bahoz Center approaches patients scientifically. First, they do an evaluation, which is based on international guidelines. The center's specialists use a form in the evaluation, and the form provides a score that indicates the extent of the problem. Then, the child is seen by a team of doctors which includes neurologists, pediatricians and psychiatrists from Erbil. The doctors decide on a diagnosis and whether rehabilitation is needed. If it is, they create a program for the child and then the child begins classes.

Every four months Bahoz reevaluates and updates the child's program. Nearly 40 children have completed the program and returned to school since 2015. Bahoz has rehabilitated over 1,500 children to date.

Bahoz closely monitors new techniques and programs around the world to make sure patients are receiving the best treatments. In order to bring the best available practices to the KRI, Bahoz regularly sends its specialists to foreign countries to attend courses and seminars. The center works closely with internationally recognized professionals from EU countries and the US who are knowledgeable in the management of children with autism.



**Bahoz Center management team is working tirelessly to create awareness for children with special needs and is lobbying to convince MPs to pass a law that will provide financial help to families who cannot afford to send their children to private centers like Bahoz.**



Bahoz also receives professional help from abroad in the auditing and management of the center.

Bahoz Center contributes to human capacity development in the KRI through its Continuous Professional Development (CPD) department. When the center was established in 2015, it had to bring in qualified personnel from abroad. Today, however, the center's CPD department trains its local staff.

Bahoz works with charity foundations to aid those who can't afford rehabilitation. The center submits grant requests to these organizations. Bahoz has been able to help 70 children through these kinds of donations in the last four years. Dr. Hoshiar Mohammad, director of the Bahoz Center, says about 250 low-income families, who have registered their children on the waiting list, are waiting for financial help.

Many families that have children with special needs seek public assistance to help cover the health care costs associated with a child's disability. In most countries, governments provide health coverage for children with special needs through special insurance programs. However, in the KRI there is no program that provides financial help for children with special needs from low-income families. The family must pay to send a child to a private center for treatment. Therefore, the Bahoz Center management team is working tirelessly to create more awareness for children with special needs and is lobbying to convince MPs to pass a law that will provide financial help to families who cannot afford to send their children to private centers like Bahoz.

One of our main aims is to have this law passed so that we can reach out and help more children with special needs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, says Ali Ibrahim Ali.



[www.bahozcenter.com](http://www.bahozcenter.com)

The Focus

## *Keeping Kurdistan Safe*

**The primary duty of any government is to protect its citizens, residents, and visitors from any sort of threat. Considering the nature of the regional security environment, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) security forces have been able to respond effectively to a complex range of threats.**



### 01.

#### Legal structure

Article 117 of the Iraqi constitution states that federal regions are responsible for the establishment of internal security forces across the region. Therefore, as a regional government, the KRG has sole responsibility for the protection of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Kurdistan's security forces, including the police, security forces, and regional guards, have been able to guarantee safety and security inside and along the borders of the KRI.

### 02.

#### Ensuring stability

The Peshmerga, which is identified by the Iraqi constitution as the KRI's military, has been a key instrument to protecting peace, stability, and peaceful coexistence. Peshmerga forces have been at the forefront in fighting against ISIS terrorism, which used to be one of the biggest threats to security and peace, not only to the KRI but to the entire region. Nearly 2,000 Peshmerga soldiers died fighting ISIS. Peshmerga forces' heroic contribution in defeating ISIS and preventing the terrorist organization's reemergence has been praised by leaders across the world.

### 03.

#### Safe and secure

Kurdistan has demonstrated that it is a place that upholds peaceful coexistence and ensures stability in the region. Kurdistan's security services are doing an excellent job, working day and night to provide security and safety. Thanks to their efforts, the KRI is one of the safest places in the Middle East. There is minimal risk from crime, and people can move around in safety.



# 05

## Chapter five: Culture & Heritage



Social cohesion, coexistence, and hospitality are the cornerstones of the Kurdish culture, which makes Kurdistan one of the welcoming places in the Middle East for outsiders.



### We are tolerant

Being Kurdish means being open minded, which is an important part of Kurdish identity.

They respect the rights of all different religious and ethnic groups living in Kurdistan.

### We are generous

Kurdish generosity comes in abundance. Refusal is deemed rude when you are offered food, or another cup of tea or coffee.

### We love nature

Kurds are deeply attached to the beautiful nature of their land, and never miss an opportunity to picnic in their soaring mountains.

### We love politics

Kurds have tendency to talk about politics a lot. From young to old, get ready to discuss regional or international political issues.

### We are perseverant

Decades of conflict have made Iraqi Kurds extraordinarily adaptable to the tough circumstances that have shaped their identity. They are well known for their patience even under the most difficult circumstances.

### We love music and dance

Kurds are passionate about their traditional music and dancing, and any event is an excuse for a celebration.

### We are respectful

Family ties play a vital role in Kurdish culture, and the most important feature of these is respect for the elderly. Even if your sibling is one year older than you, you need to respectfully listen to him or her.

### We are patriotic

In Iraqi Kurdistan, national symbols are everywhere, and t-shirts, cars, and phones are often emblazoned with the Kurdish flag or national colors.

### We are friendly

Kurds enjoy heartfelt discussions, even with people they don't know very well, and exhibit an openness and welcoming attitude towards outsiders.

Q&amp;A

## The Role of Women

*Vala Fareed Ibrahim*

Minister of State

**Minister Vala Fareed Ibrahim on advancing the status of women, and the socioeconomic impact of the development of female education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).**



**I believe that promoting the role and status of women in society is among the major drivers of social development. Thus, the status of women in any society is an important indicator of that society's development, excellence, and coherence.**

### **How do you define the role of women in the KRI?**

There has been considerable improvement with regard to the role of women in the KRI in the last ten years. Women are gradually becoming involved in Kurdistan's decision-making in a number of sectors, including politics, business, the academy, legislation and others.

Women's rights are protected under the law in the KRI. By law, at least 30 percent of the MPs in the Kurdistan Parliament must be women. Currently, there are three women in the cabinet. Our parliament speaker and one of the deputy speakers are also women.

Every society has key pillars that define its route to development. I believe that promoting the role and status of women in society is among the major drivers of social development. Thus, the status of women in any society is an important indicator of that society's development, excellence, and coherence.

The 9th cabinet of the KRG is a reform cabinet. The KRG is proud of the contribution women make to its

development. Women's empowerment and gender equality are in line with the KRG's vision for the future. We aim to become an excellent model for how to achieve balance between the roles all members play in society.

### **To what extent is the education of women a priority in the KRI?**

We have made substantial progress in women's education in the last two decades. Net primary school enrollment has reached more than 96 percent, and the literacy rate for women has reached 82 percent. The number of universities has grown from seven in 2004 to 26 in 2019. There has been a significant increase in education rates for women across all types of academic degrees, including post-graduate studies. In higher education, over 40 percent of the students are women. It means a lot for me to see how young Kurdish girls are now involved in various fields of education. Due to the development of education in the KRI, female participation in the workforce is also on the rise. So, we are increasingly partnering with men to contribute to the progress of our nation.

Q&amp;A

## Coexistence

*Pishtiwan Sadiq*

Minister of Endowment and Religious Affairs

**Minister Pishtiwan Sadiq on the peaceful coexistence in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.**



**Our vision is to introduce protective laws, strengthen institutions, appoint religious representatives, and deepen intra-religious dialogue in order to promote and protect the rights and freedom of religious minorities and to maintain the current peaceful co-existence in Kurdistan.**

### **On the peaceful coexistence and tolerance in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)**

The Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs held a conference in 2016, bringing together five-hundred clerics. The conference produced sixteen recommendations which went on to form the basis for the Ministry's policy program. We, as the Ministry, are an executive party tasked with implementing all these recommendations which were developed to ensure peaceful coexistence. Within this, we have carried out reforms of the KRI's religious schools that have respected religious groups' rights.

There are eight major religious components in the KRI; Muslims, Christians, Yezidi, Jews, Sabean Mandaean, Kaka'i, Zoroastrians and Bahais. We are proud that all religious groups live together peacefully and enjoy relatively robust religious freedoms in Kurdistan.

Our vision is to introduce protective laws, strengthen institutions, appoint religious representatives, and deepen intra-religious dialogue in order to promote and protect the rights and

freedom of religious minorities and to maintain the current peaceful coexistence in Kurdistan.

### **On the religious sites & worship places for Christians and Yezidis in the KRI**

The KRI is home to the majority of Iraq's Christian populations (largely of Assyrian, Chaldean, and Syriac ethnicities), and the majority of Iraq's Yezidi community. There are currently 126 churches in the KRI. The KRI's Christian community has a population of around 550,000. There are also 40 Christian sacred places in the KRI. Yezidi population is around 600,000 in the KRI. There are 193 Yezidi shrines, most of which are located in Duhok as well as some of the districts and sub-districts of Mosul and the plains of Nineveh.



The Focus

# Religious Diversity & the Spirit of Coexistence

**Kurdistan Region of Iraq is a place where all religious groups live together peacefully and enjoy robust religious freedoms.**

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), home to considerable religious and ethnic diversity, has set an integrated model for tolerance and peaceful coexistence among followers of different religions. The KRI has provided a safe haven for minorities fleeing violence in the rest of the region.

The Kurdistan Regional Government promotes peaceful coexistence between followers of different religions: Muslims, Christians, Yazidis, Jews, Sabean Mandeans, Zoroastrians, Kakais, and Bahais.

To encourage diversity, 11 seats in the Kurdistan Parliament are automatically assigned to parties representing minority groups in the KRI. Five seats are allocated to Turkoman representatives, five to Chaldean, Assyrian, and Syriac representatives, and one to the Armenian community.

There are clear articles in Kurdistan's draft constitution and passages in laws written by the Kurdistan Parliament that explicitly promote and defend freedom of religion and other minority rights.

In 2015, the Kurdistan Parliament passed "The Minority Rights Law", which lays out a series of rights, including the freedoms of thought, religion, speech, and culture. The law, which unequivocally grants rights and religious freedoms to all, mandates the KRG to guarantee equality for all component groups of the region, while requiring that religious discrimination be punished.

The Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs hosts two Directorates for Minority Affairs, one for Christians, and the other for Yazidis. The Ministry also is home to the eight religious representatives, including individuals who represent the Muslim, Christian, Yazidi, Kakai, Baha'i, and Jewish faiths. These representatives meet monthly at a specially created directorate for religious coexistence.

## The International Religious Freedom Act

The International Religious Freedom Act requires countries that commit systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom be designated "countries of particular concern". The Kurdistan Region of Iraq was considered separately from the rest of Iraq, it also would not meet the necessary standard for designation as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act. There are no ongoing or systematic violations of religious freedom in Kurdistan.

**There are clear articles in Kurdistan's draft constitution and passages in laws written by the Kurdistan Parliament that explicitly promote and defend freedom of religion and other minority rights.**



# Never Again

**The Halabja Monument honors the victims of a genocidal campaign against Iraqi Kurds and reflects the darkest episode in Kurdish history.**



**The Halabja Memorial was opened in 2003 to honor an estimated 5,000 people, mostly women and children, who were killed when Iraqi jets dropped mustard and sarin gas on the town on March 16, 1988.**

With a museum inside featuring photographs, artifacts, poems, and a list of the victims' names, the 30-meter structure gives Halabja residents a solemn place to honor family members they lost in the attack.

Kurdish history during the reign of Saddam Hussein was scarred by a campaign of destruction and emotional turmoil.

The Halabja attack was the deadliest offensive in the government's Operation Anfal, a genocidal campaign against Iraqi Kurds, which took place between February and September 1988. During the Anfal campaign some 4,000 villages were wiped out and nearly 180,000 Kurds perished. Halabja attack is considered as one of the worst atrocities of the modern era.

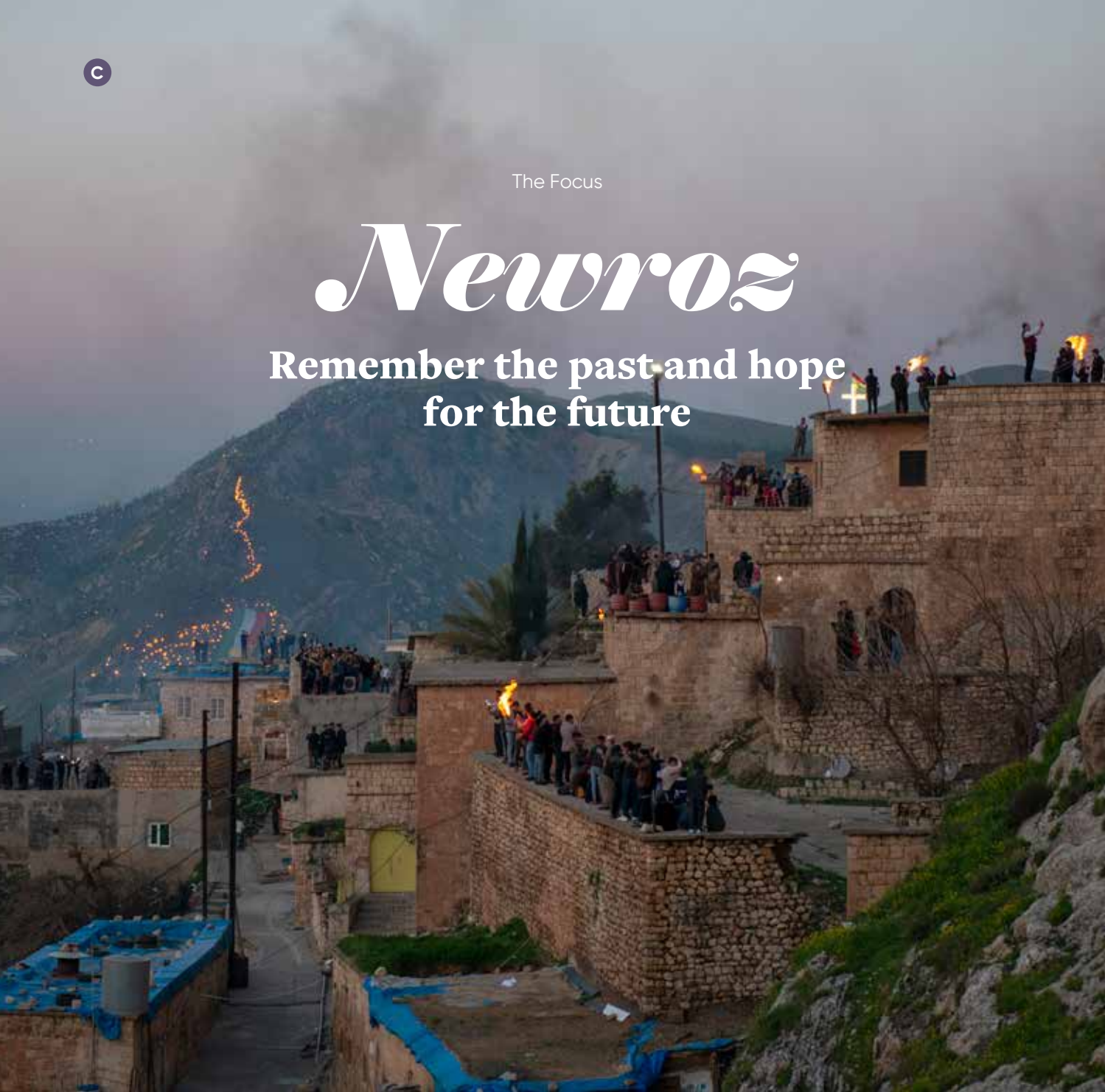
**In 1993, Human Rights Watch reached the conclusion that Iraq had committed genocide against the Kurds after a broad investigation. Norway became the first country to describe Iraq's Operation Anfal as genocide, followed by Sweden, Britain, and South Korea.**



The Focus

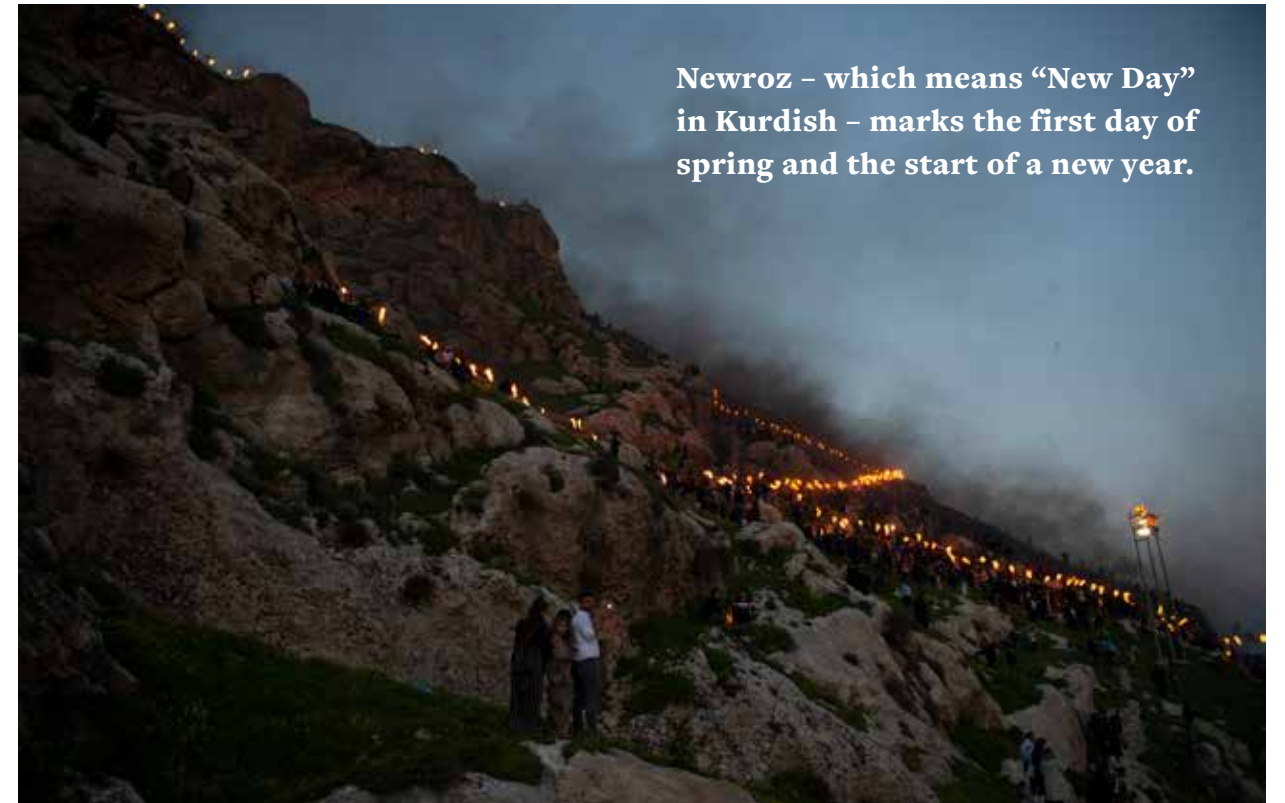
# Newroz

Remember the past and hope  
for the future



**Celebrated every year between the 21st and 23rd of March, Newroz is the most significant annual festival in the KRI. Newroz – which means “New Day” in Kurdish – marks the first day of spring and the start of a new year.**

Newroz symbolizes the Kurd’s revolution and struggle against injustice. According to legend, one year, spring didn’t come because of the evil King Zuhak’s tyrannical reign. The blacksmith Kawa led an uprising against the unjust king, defeating him on the eve of Newroz. Kawa lit a fire on a mountaintop to celebrate his victory. The next day spring returned to Kurdistan.



**Newroz – which means “New Day” in Kurdish – marks the first day of spring and the start of a new year.**

**During the celebration of Newroz, Kurds wear traditional clothes, perform folk dances, and light bonfires and torches.**



# Kurdistan Flag Day

Kurdistan Flag Day is commemorated on December 17th every year since it was first launched in 2009 by the Kurdistan Parliament.

**Kurdistan flag symbolizes its past and its aspirations for the future.**

- **Red:** Symbolizes the sacrifices of previous generations who had laid the foundations for Kurdistan and the sacrifices of the nation's martyrs to safeguarding Kurdistan and its achievements.
- **Green:** Reflects Kurdistan's landscape, green environment, and vitality.
- **Yellow:** Reflects the life and light of the people. The sun, an ancient symbol, represents Newruz.
- **White:** Symbolizes Kurdistan's dedication to peace and equality.



The Focus

## Kurdish National Dress

**An integral element of Kurdish identity**

Kurds have some of the most recognizable, distinctive, and colorful traditional outfits in the Middle East.

Kurdish national dress, Jli Kurdi, is an integral part of Kurdish identity, and the ultimate expression of their national identity.



For men, the outfit consists of baggy pants with a fitted top, often in muted earth tones. A large sash (the pishtend) is wrapped around the waist. Some men also wear a scarf wrapped around the head.

For women, the outfit consists of a long, flamboyantly embroidered dress, paired with a jacket and multi-hued belt. Women also wear gold jewelry.

# Run

## in the world's oldest city

**The Erbil Marathon is an international sport event that aims to nurture peace and nonviolence in Iraq, and to demonstrate to the world that there is a strong community of civil society leaders in Iraq that is committed to dialogue and harmony.**

The first Erbil International Marathon was held in 2011. Over the years, it has become one of Kurdistan's most popular sporting events. Over 4,000 runners took part in the eighth Erbil International Marathon in 2019. The event features a full 42-kilometer marathon, as well as two shorter routes, at 10 kilometers and 5 kilometers.

**42-kilometer**  
marathon

and two shorter routes

**10 kilometers**  
**5 kilometers**



The Focus

# Ones to Watch

**The Kurdish media giant Rudaw is one of the fastest-growing multi-platform media organizations in the Middle East.**

Laying the foundation of Rudaw Media Network has been the most important breakthrough in the Kurdish media landscape to date and has witnessed a rapid transformation over the last decade.

media. As the total number of hours spent consuming media continues to grow globally, online sources are becoming the preferred channel. Rudaw's social media management has accurately analyzed regional

on Instagram, and 1.4 million on Twitter. Rudaw's engagement in July 2020 on Facebook alone reached over 17 million people, putting the media company among the region's major news channels. Rudaw has also

**The multi-platform media company was founded in 2013 to brief the world on the Kurdistan Region, Iraq, and the wider Middle East in English, Kurdish, Arabic, and Turkish. In a very short period of time, Rudaw became a respected regional media outlet.**



Creating a vibrant regional media outlet in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has allowed "Made in Kurdistan" news and content creation, in which Rudaw has set the bar high to ensure that quality levels meet global standards of journalism. Thanks to this principle, Rudaw has quickly become a reliable source for the world's leading media agencies, which have been using Rudaw's media outputs when covering Kurdistan and Iraq. Rudaw's high-quality news content both nationally and internationally has also helped Kurdistan to cement its reputation on a regional and global scale.

One of the leading drivers behind Rudaw's success has been its ability to keep up with emerging trends in news

and global social networking trends, making it one of the leading media companies, not only in Iraq but also in the Middle East.

**Rudaw's social media engagement reached 100 million people in under a month in 2017, which was higher than many of the world's leading news organizations.**

This success was awarded by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers that same year. Currently, Rudaw has 3.3 million followers on Facebook, 1.9 million

successfully transformed the Kurdish media landscape by bringing together talent and opportunity in the media space, providing new employment opportunities for Kurdish youth, igniting its creativity, and fostering the development of local talent equipped with the required skills locally and internationally.

Rudaw has been raising awareness of the Kurdish people and the KRI globally, while promoting national values both at home and abroad. The growth of Rudaw has been steady and demonstrates Kurdish contributions to global journalism.



**Kurdistan Museum is a fascinating project that will shine a light on Kurdistan's past, present, and future. Designed by world-renowned architect Daniel Libeskind, the 150,000-square-foot museum will be located in the ancient citadel of Erbil.**

The complex will feature exhibition spaces, a lecture theatre, state-of-the-art multimedia educational resources, an extensive digital archive of Kurdish historical assets, as well as a community center and outdoor spaces for public use. The museum will be key to sharing Kurdistan's customs and history with the world and inspire open dialogue for future generations in Kurdistan. It will also support the preservation of the Kurdish national heritage in the region.



“The design had to navigate between two extreme emotions: sadness and tragedy, through the weight of history, and of joy and hope, as the nation looks to the future.”

Daniel Libeskind



# The Slemani Museum



**Established in 1961, the Slemani Museum is the second-largest museum in Iraq after the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad.**

The museum was closed several times during armed conflicts but was opened again in 2000. The museum displays important collections of Iraqi antiquities rescued from famous archaeological sites, and covers 6,000 square meters. The museum's hall was reconstructed by UNESCO.

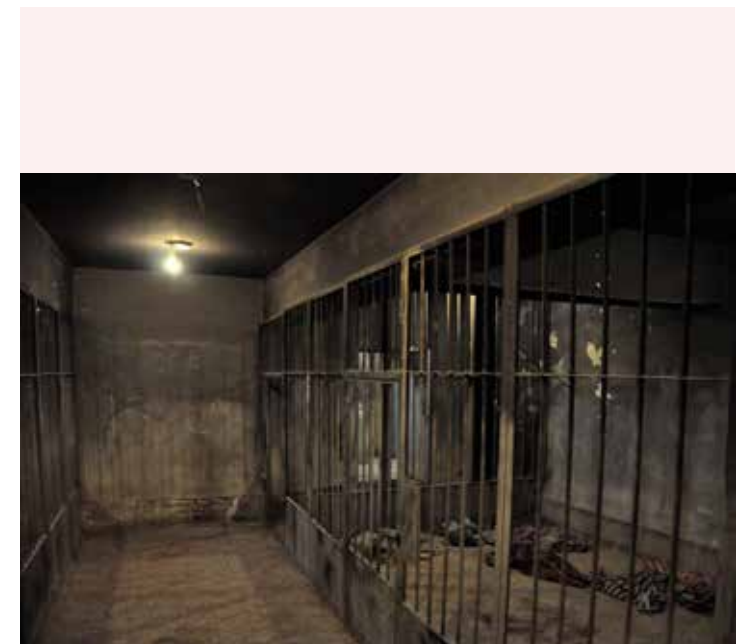


# Amna Suraka Museum



**Amna Suraka (Red Prison) functioned as a detention center for the Kurdish population during the regime of Saddam Hussein, and many crimes against humanity were committed here.**

It was liberated in 1991 and is now a museum. The site has been left almost exactly as it was three decades ago. Amna Suraka documents the cruelty of the Ba'athist regime towards the Iraqi Kurds. The mirrors inside the museum represent the estimated 180,000 Kurds killed by Saddam during his campaign of repression.



# Erbil Civilization Museum



**Opened in 1961, the Erbil Civilization Museum has the second-largest collection of any museum in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.**

This features a collection of interesting artifacts from pre-history to the late-Abbasid period. The museum's content and collections has been growing in recent years.



# Kurdish Textile Museum



**Located in Erbil Citadel, the Kurdish Textile Museum is a cultural hub for Erbil and an example for future generations. Opened in 2004, the museum showcases the Iraqi Kurdistan's rich textile history and cultural heritage.**

The museum exhibits the spinning and weaving process of the textile items, as well as fabrics, raw materials, and natural wool dyeing using wild plants and flowers. Some of the exhibits are several centuries old. The aim of the museum is to keep Kurdish tribes' art and customs alive, and to revive interest in Kurdish weaving so that it will not be lost to history.





# MR. ERBIL

## Bringing fashion to Kurdistan

The story of Mr. Erbil was started by a group of friends, who are passionate about fashion, cared about dressing well, and shared photos on Instagram to show the other face of Kurdistan. This well-dressed, creative group of gentlemen, who have drawn the attention of leading regional and international media, have become style icons and inspirations for the youth in Kurdistan.



Realizing the need and demand in the market, they have decided to launch the first gentlemen's club in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The contemporary establishment offers high-quality, bespoke men's clothing, and houses a coffee shop and a barber. The club's fashion line produces handmade luxury clothes of the highest quality, made by local tailors. Mr. Erbil uses authentic, high-quality local fabrics.



**Mr. Erbil's members reflect Kurdistan's ethnic and religious diversity. They come from all walks of life and different religions.**

The club advocates gender equality by promoting female activists and talents. The club is also raising awareness about the environment, as well as hosting various events on women's rights.

Mr. Erbil has proved how fashion can make a difference and has successfully portrayed the potential of young entrepreneurs from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.





**ERBIL**  
INT. HOTEL



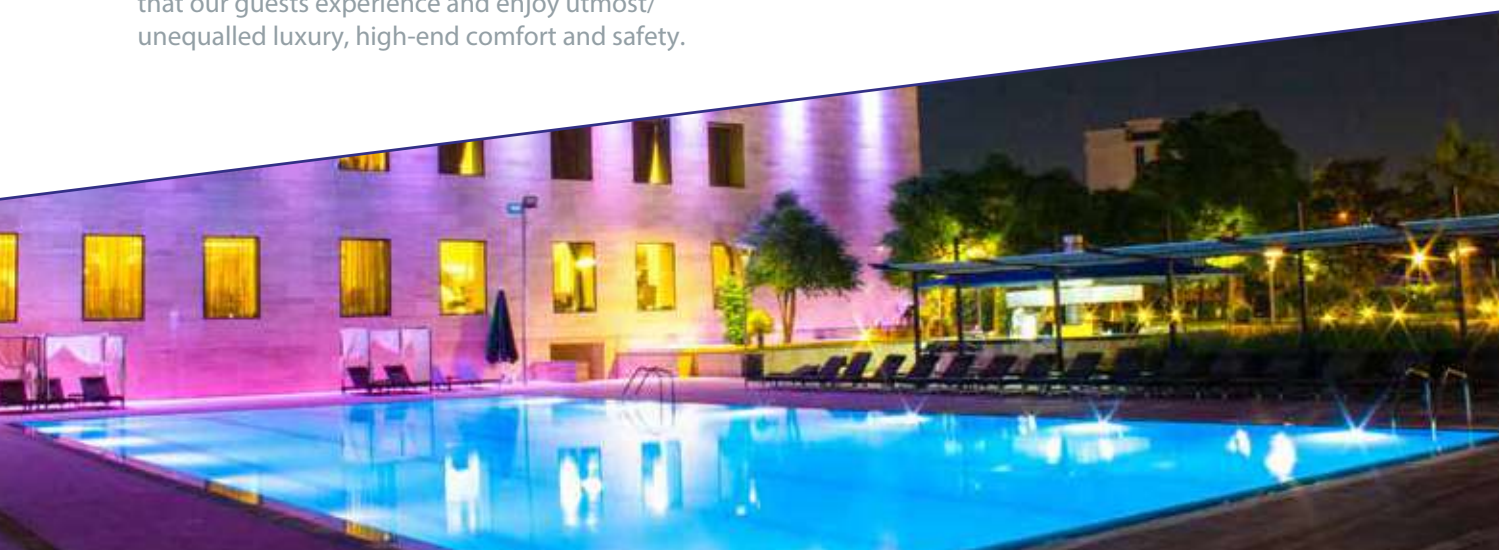
## Location

Erbil International Hotel is ideally located in the heart of Erbil, just 2km/two kilometres from the city centre and historical citadel.

The ten-story luxury accommodation overlooking Gelgand Park is one of the most sought after five-star international hotels in the Kurdistan region.

## Accommodations

Erbil International Hotel has 163 elegant rooms and suites and offers various facilities and services to ensure that our guests experience and enjoy utmost/unequaled luxury, high-end comfort and safety.



## Guest Room

### Amenities

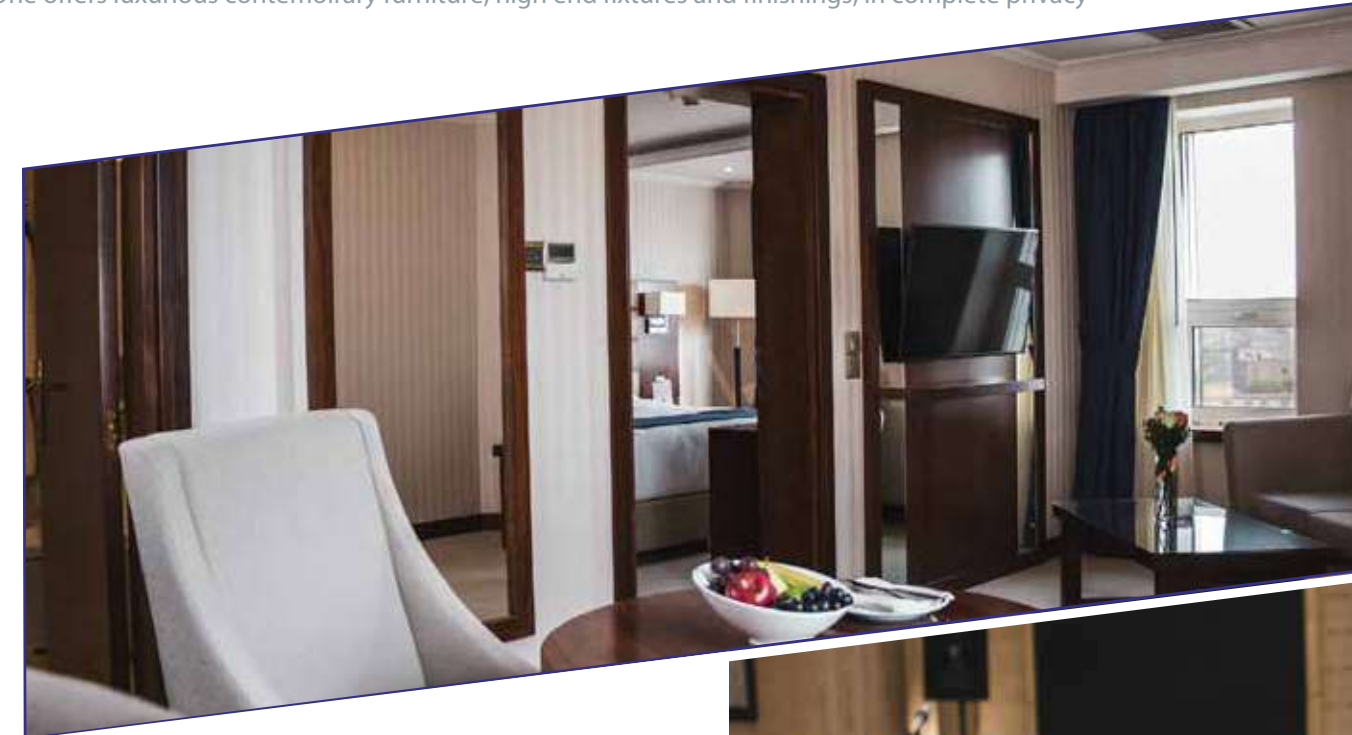
At Erbil International Hotel, our guests are our priority. We pay keen attention to the smallest of detail, making sure that each one of our deluxe rooms and suites offers all the amenities of luxury five-star hotel

including:

- Internet Connection
- Direct Telephone Lines
- Safety Deposit Box
- Mini Bar
- Hairdryer
- TV with international Channels
- Wake-up Service and -24hour Room Service.

### Suites

Erbil International Hotel has, 22 executive Suites and 1 presidential suite, each individually comparable in luxury and elegance to other five-star venues around the world. Each One offers luxurious contemporary furniture, high end fixtures and finishings, in complete privacy.



## Banquet & Ballroom Facilities

Both The Citadel Hall, for over 300 guests, and The Hawler Banquet Hall, for 500 guests, are ideal venues for private gala dinners, wedding ceremonies, cocktail parties and other business or social functions.

## Business & Conference Facilities

Two Conference Rooms adjacent to the fully equipped Business Centre in the lobby, provide capacity for up to 80 people each and are outfitted with the latest in smart-office technology.



## Restaurants & Bars

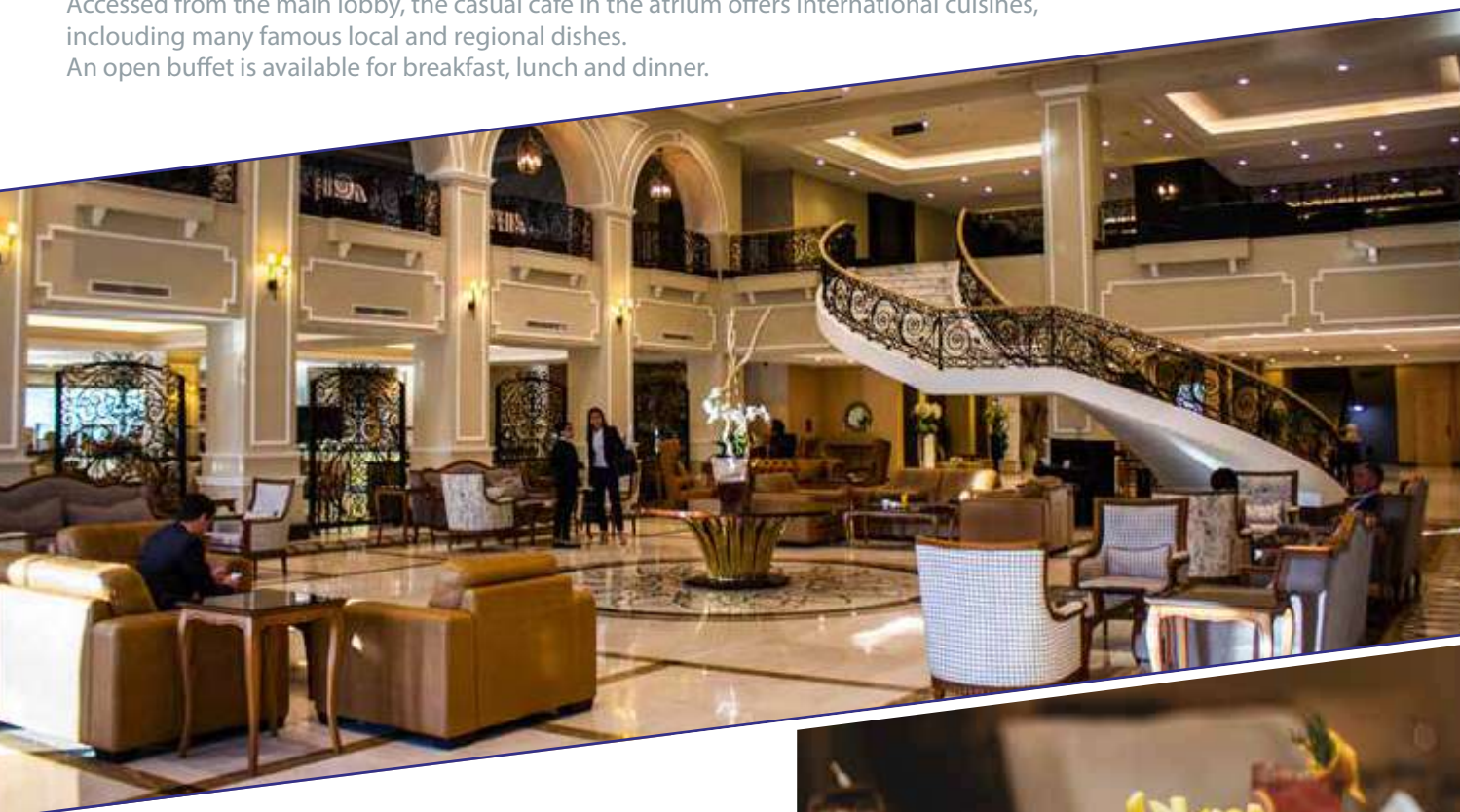
### The Lobby Lounge

A convenient meeting place, offering refreshments and light snacks with soft music playing in the background.

### The Atrium Coffee Shop

Accessed from the main lobby, the casual café in the atrium offers international cuisines, including many famous local and regional dishes.

An open buffet is available for breakfast, lunch and dinner.



### Carlucci Restaurant

Situated on the mezzanine, the charming restaurant is specialized in Italian cuisine and fine dining and also offers a fine selection of wines and cocktails.

### The Bekhal Brasserie

Choose from light oriental snacks, grills and Masgouf Fish (Iraqi style grilled fish) while seated outdoors, by the pond, enjoying nature at its best.

### The Loft Restaurant

Enjoy the breath-taking night-time panoramic view of the famous Citadel and city centre of Erbil, while dancing to a musical mix of western and oriental hits.

### 24-Hour Room Service

Food and beverage services are available around the clock. The Room Service menu consists of a fine selection of snacks, meals and beverages to be enjoyed in the comfort and privacy of your room.



## Facilities & Services

### Body Flex & SPA - Balance and Harmony - Fitness Club

The Erbil International Hotel takes wellness seriously because we understand that travel and fitness go hand in hand. We offer spa and gym facilities to keep our guests delighted, exhilarated and energized, long after your stay/farewell.

Our five-star spa offers luxurious tranquillity and intuitive care to relax, refresh and rejuvenate. Enjoy a wealth of sensory experiences with our various special treatments in the oasis of a personal private spa room, Turkish bar And Sauna.

Stay fit and in good health in our exclusive and fully equipped private gym.

### In-House Facilities and Services

- 24 hour Room Service
- Car Rental and Car Park Facilities
- Laundry and Dry Cleaning
- International Direct Dialling
- Free Internet Services
- Free Airport Transfer To and From Hawler International Airport (available upon request and reservation)



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# Quest Of Growth

### Energy

- Bazian Power Plant
- Bazian Oil Refinery
- Qaiwan Tank Terminal

### Construction

- Qaiwan City
- Slemani Heights
- Qaiwan Heights
- Qaiwan Tower
- City Towers

### Electronics

- Hitachi
- Hisense
- Grand

### Industry

- Maya Tissue
- Maya Battery Recycling



### Hospitality

- Rotana Hotel Slemani
- Sky Hotel

### Medical Services

- Garmyan Medical City (GMC)
- Anwar Shexa Hospital

### Education

- Maya Education Co
- Qaiwan International University - UTM
- 4 Institute
- 4 School
- United Science Colleges
- 12 School

