

Joint Interreligious Statement of Faith-Based Organizations operating in Iraq on the occasion of the Apostolic Visit of H.H. Pope Francis (March 5-8, 2021)

March 2, 2021

We, the undersigned faith-based organizations working in Iraq, representing the call of our respective religions to human solidarity, welcome the visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to the birthplace of Abraham, father of many in faith.

Iraq is the cradle of human civilization and a beautiful country of rich cultural and religious diversity. For centuries, many ethnic and faith communities lived side by side in this land. However, in recent decades, Iraq has suffered from war, insecurity and instability and, most recently, from the rise of ISIS. Such a sequence of conflicts has deeply strained relations between communities and damaged the country's social fabric.

Today, Iraq still faces daunting challenges. Among the 1.2 million Iraqis who continue to be internally displaced and approximately 4.8 million returnees, many are in dire need of help. Meanwhile, a worsening economic crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, is pushing many into poverty and depriving the government of resources needed to assist its own people.

In his recent encyclical letter "Fratelli Tutti", Pope Francis writes that religions have a major role to play at the service of fraternity in our world. The Abu Dhabi Document on Human Fraternity further explains: "Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved. [...] Believers are called to express this human fraternity by safeguarding creation and the entire universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need."

As faith-based organizations, we fully embrace this message of fraternity and dialogue that Pope Francis is bringing to Iraq. We firmly believe it represents a necessary way forward to heal past wounds and build a future for the country's diverse communities. We work in collaboration with the national and local Authorities to help communities reconcile, rebuild peace, and reclaim their collective rights to safety, services, and livelihoods.

Inspired by Pope Francis' teaching on human fraternity, we commit to:

- Continue to serve and empower people solely on the basis of their need, rejecting any form of discrimination.
- Respect others' cultural values and religious convictions as we continue to reject all sectarianism and proselytism in our actions and in our partnerships.
- Strengthen inclusive initiatives and approaches that foster social cohesion.
- Intensify collaboration among us in the service of those in need, as we live out our common call to solidarity.

Finally, we urge the international community to remain engaged in supporting the Iraqi people to overcome their current challenges, in a true spirit of human fraternity and solidarity.

Adyan Foundation
Ankawa Humanitarian Committee
Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII
Assyrian Aid Society Iraq
Caritas Czech Republic
Caritas Germany
Caritas Iraq
Catholic Relief Services
Christian Aid
Christian Aid Program – CAPNI
CNEWA / Pontifical Mission
Cordaid
Dan Church Aid
Dorcas
FOCSIV
Fondazione AVSI
Fraternité en Irak
Hungarian Interchurch Aid
Internationales Katholisches Missionswerk missio Aachen – Pontifical Mission Society
Islamic Relief Worldwide
Jesuit Refugee Service
Lutheran World Federation
Lutheran World Relief
Malteser International
Masarat
Norwegian Church Aid
Stand With Iraqi Christians
World Vision International
ZOA