

## HAND FOR HAND e.V. The NGO is setting up a Primary School for Children in Exile A perspective for inland refugees in northern Iraq

Current project status, July 10, 2019

**The objective of the project is to provide traumatized refugee children a manageable niche of security and to provide them with schooling in their own country during their time in exile.**

When children learn to read, write, and calculate, their chances of finding work later in Iraq and building their own local existence grows. We want to create the foundations for that. We want to improve living conditions and help uprooted people to be able to develop new perspectives in their own country and not having to think about migration.

As a result, 100 children will be schooled, who have been hanging around since their escape four years ago. They receive education, find meaningful content and joy. In the side line the women of the village are in the focus who are enabled to lead a self-determined life. Starting from the beginning, 5 adults will receive permanent employment. They also get meaningful content in life, they will have important tasks and new perspectives. In addition, they use their income to secure the existence of their families, typically with 7-8 people each. With the school, the village as a whole receives a cultural centre from which much more can and will emerge.

### The students are internally displaced Yazidis in Northern Iraq

The children are among the Yazidis who fled the Shingal region from the terror regime of the Islamic State (IS) in 2014 and barely escaped genocide. They are internally displaced persons and come from different social classes. In the large Kurdish refugee camps they found no place and therefore now live in the deserted village under simple tarpaulins, in ruins or under a bridge.

Every single child has experienced and seen unimaginable suffering. They have nothing except their traumas. Many are alone, their families were abducted or murdered. The parents, among them many single women, are partially too traumatized to really be able to care about their own children.

### Located in an isolated village of Kurdistan

The small village Shekhre is located in the Kurdish autonomous region on the edge of a mountain range between the northern Iraqi city Dohuk and the river Tigris. It is largely cut off from the outside world. In summer it is extremely hot, in winter extremely cold. Although there is relative security in the area, it lacks the essentials. There is no school for the children yet.

We deliberately chose this place because it is under the radar of attention and equally beyond the reach of the major aid agencies and state aid. About 400 people live there on their own.



### A primary school with perspective is being built

The idea is to start with a primary school, whereby looking forward an extension is conceivable. Then, children from nearby villages can be accommodated, or the offer of parallel adult education for mothers, activities with the villagers, etc. can be supplemented.



## Remarkable achievements since the beginning of this year

The formal requirements are met for the charitable status of the organisation and for the operation of the school in Iraq. We employed and onboarded Hadi as a first-class local coordinator. He reliably manages the issues, supervises the construction work and eventually will take over the management of the school. Important networks are linked, with official agencies and also with another German-supported school in a neighbouring city. It is clear to us that we can not really assess everything from Germany. That's why we've teamed up with various experienced consultants from similar projects in the area. A ruin is rented and largely restored. With the help of local craftsmen, it is being converted into a very simple school building. Three competent teachers are selected and are ready to be onboarded. We will start with our coordinator as headmaster, joined by a female and a male teacher. These later will be supported by volunteers.

We have made first experiences in working with the children in project work. The yearning of children for school lessons is overwhelming, and their enthusiasm for the new school touches every visitor. For that reason, we simply had to install a provisional lesson with each visit. At the moment it is rather „playing school“, before serious classes begin in October. In the Building we organize meetings with the children, as well as with the adult village population, the village head and the village elders to find out their wishes and expectations. These will be woven into the content concept.



### Next steps following the ambitious target: Beginning of school in mid-October

- **Top priority at the moment is the collection of donations:** In Germany we are working feverishly on the financing of the school. Based on donations, the Organisation still has to come up for the final setup costs. From September on it has to reliably cover the monthly running costs of the school.
- As an entry point a school in Berlin has donated used **school furniture**. This will be **supplemented with additional equipment** needed to start the school on a green field. DHL has sponsored a Truck which will **transport the equipment to Iraq** at the end of August.
- In Iraq, the **final construction phase** of the building will be completed in late summer.
- At the same time, the **content concept will be finalized** and the **teaching staff** will be onboarded and trained as part of a substantive cooperation with an on-site educational institution.

#### Current Needs

The members of the organisation and their colleagues all work as volunteers and help according to their abilities. We finance the trips ourselves. The set up phase and the two construction phases have already been financially covered by donations. The current financial need is as follows:

- **Finalizing the Setup of the school: 8,000 Euros.**
- **Monthly running costs of the school: 4.000 Euro** (starting September 2019)

We need, are seeking and and hoping for **single and ongoing donations**. Every donation is welcome.

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Keyword: „Donation HELIN School“