

**#GIVING CRIMES
A NAME
NEWSLETTER
WINTER 2023**



w a d i

DEAR SUPPORTERS, DEAR FRIENDS,

from THOMAS VON DER OSTEN-SACKEN



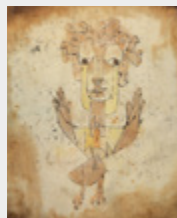
Next summer will mark the tenth anniversary of the unspeakable massacres committed by the Islamic State against Yazidis in Iraq in 2014. These crimes have now been classified, unanimously, by the German Bundestag as genocide. A decision that would certainly have been in the spirit of Raphael Lemkin, the man who almost single-handedly managed to get the then young United Nations to adopt the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” in the 1940s. The Polish-Jewish lawyer Lemkin, who fled the Nazis to the USA, regularly listened to the famous radio speeches of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. In one, he described the “barbaric rampage of the Nazis” as “a crime without a name.” Lemkin not only wanted to give this crime a name, namely genocide, but also to ensure that something similar would never happen again.

The UN convention was correspondingly ambitious; it was less concerned with retrospectively recognizing crimes as genocides, but rather with making sure that the oft-used “never again” was translated into internationally valid law and that all those who those who are suspected of planning genocide can be preemptively targeted, because, as Lemkin once stated in a speech, genocide is even worse than war.

As is well known, history has continued since then as Walter Benjamin’s angel of history has always experienced it, namely as a “catastrophe that continually piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it at his feet”. Whether in Cambodia, Rwanda or the Sinjar Mountains in Iraq, genocides took place again in full view of everyone, without anyone stopping them. Instead, after each of these crimes against humanity, there were only vows that something similar should never happen again. Vows that lasted exactly until the next one took place.

What also distinguishes the genocide from other massacres, wars and crimes is that the genocidal murderers, no matter what happens to them later, always emerge as victors. This fact is so terrible that one usually fights it off and represses it, and yet it has to be expressed again and again. This is also the case with the Yazidis in Iraq: the Islamic State has not achieved its goal, they have not been completely annihilated or destroyed, but there will no longer be a status quo ante for them. Hundreds of thousands now live in Europe and other Western countries, although most are still in so-called camps for internally displaced people in Kurdish northern Iraq. There is little hope for them of returning to the Sinjar Mountains, as various militias are still in charge there and large parts of the area remain in ruins.

It's hard to realize, but in the camp schools where our Yazidi employees work as part of Wadi's anti-violence campaign, all primary school students were now born in the camps. They don't know any other reality. And if nothing fundamental changes, which is unfortunately expected at the moment, then they will also be able to graduate from school as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP, as internally displaced persons are called in UN jargon) in these camp schools. (Incidentally, IDP is a neologism from the times when the UN Convention was adopted and referred to millions upon millions of people who had become homeless as a result of the "barbaric rampage of the Nazis" and were now wandering around Europe.)

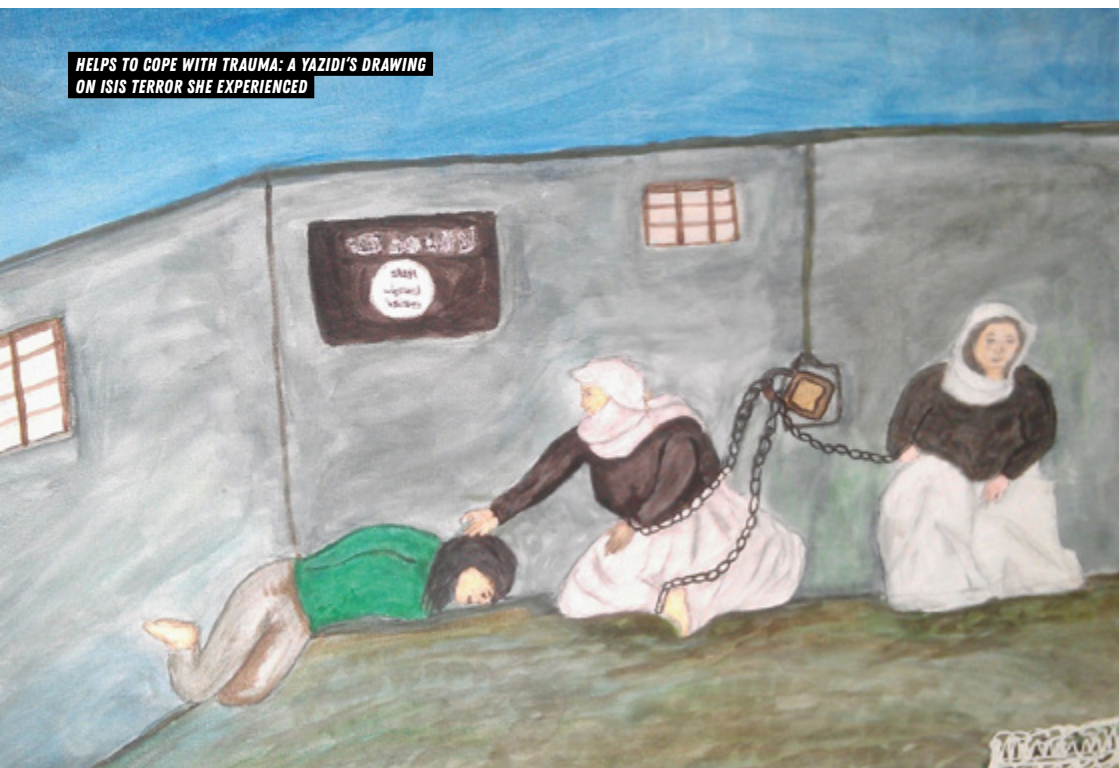


„There is a painting by Klee called **Angelus Novus**. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance

himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair [verweilen: a reference to Goethe's *Faust*], to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm. “.

Walter Benjamin,
On the concept of history

**HELPS TO COPE WITH TRAUMA: A YAZIDI'S DRAWING
ON ISIS TERROR SHE EXPERIENCED**



The fate of these students is just one example among many of what it means to be a victim of genocide. We should also remember everyone who was abused as so-called sex slaves by IS fighters and those whose family members were exhumed in one of the countless mass graves in recent years.

As important as it is that what happened to them is now recognized as genocide by the German and other parliaments, it would have been even more important in 2014, when it was so clear what was

going to happen, that the act should be carried out with everyone at the disposal means to prevent. Because this tragedy could have been prevented if only there had been the will to implement the Convention for the Prevention of Genocide. So the only consolation is that those who are caught and charged in Europe must expect high penalties. However, jurisprudence, which fortunately is now taking place again and again against them, is not reparation, because what was destroyed back then can never be even partially remedied.

**...OUR PARTNER
ORGANIZATION JINDA
HAS HELPED
HUNDREDS OF GIRLS
WITH THEIR
REINTEGRATION**

It should be all the more important to support the survivors in every way possible, to help them in the truest sense: to survive and, wherever possible, to start a new life. This is not only the imperative of humanity, but also the strongest sign that we can send together to the perpetrators: You may have thought you won, but you did not succeed in destroying this group that you wanted to destroy. Every girl who returned from the clutches of ISIS and was taken back in, who now perhaps, and there are many such examples, goes to college, opens a hair salon or helps others, is a victory over those who wanted to destroy her. Our partner organization in Dohuk, the Jinda Center, has helped hundreds of girls with their reintegration, most recently in the now successful recycling center in the Khabatoo camp, just as other organizations have done the same with hundreds of other girls.

Such small success stories should not hide the fact that the fate of the Yazidis is slowly but surely being forgotten inter-

nationally. Other disasters continually pile up rubble on top of rubble and dominate the headlines and we are often asked, almost astonished: What, hundreds of thousands of them are still living in camps? Yes, they do, and the fact that this is forgotten can unfortunately be seen as another and late victory for those who wanted to wipe them out back then.

What is happening in Germany these days is just as frightening: Yazidis who had made it to Germany as refugees at the time and were only tolerated under Section 51 or Section 53 of immigration law are increasingly receiving deportation notices. The first ones were even “deported” to Iraq against their will, as it is called in the cold official language. Tens of thousands of people who could also be affected by such decisions are watching this development with growing horror, and Yazidi organizations have sounded the alarm, some even organizing a hunger strike in Berlin.

We too couldn’t believe our eyes or ears when we found out about these decisions, and then we took action together with other organizations and individuals. Together we wrote an open letter to all members of the German Bundestag to remind them that just a few months ago they had recognized the crimes of IS as genocide. At page 6 are some **excerpts** that speak for themselves.

We hope that this letter, supported by many well-known initial signatories, will have an impact and we will continue to do everything we can to prevent further deportations.

“Dear Members of Parliament,

We are writing to you with this letter because we receive new messages about deportations of Yazidis and many desperate cries for help every day.

Less than a year ago, on January 19, 2023, you all voted - unanimously, without any party pressure and only committed to your conscience - for the “recognition of the genocide against the Yazidis” (printed matter 20/5228). In doing so, you have awakened the hopes and expectations of people who have fled death and oppression and found a new home in Germany. People who relied on the implementation of strong statements. (...)

In doing so, Germany stood unwaveringly on the side of the Yazidis. Disenfranchised people, all of whom had to experience murders, forced conversions, hostage-taking and countless rapes of close relatives in their families, were given the certainty that they could start a new life, with all the rights and obligations, a fair life in the new hometown.

This certainty is being turned into the opposite by the deportations that have now been carried out and are still planned. By returning, the Yazidis are threatened with a continuation of the genocide. Don't allow the so-called “Islamic State” to win in the end. Show that Germany stands firmly on the side of the victims and bring the oft-quoted “Never Again” to life.

The Yazidi community, which is just beginning to come to terms with its trauma, at least in the diaspora, is deeply unsettled by the recent deportations. Almost all federal states are increasingly deporting “tolerated” Yazidis back to their country of origin, Iraq. These deportations contradict the request of their decision from January and also the agreement reached by the Conference of Interior Ministers in 2019 to only deport Yazidis to Iraq if they have committed serious crimes.

Traumatized people are sent back to the country of the perpetrators. Their brothers and sisters are still living in completely inadequately equipped and overcrowded refugee camps; there is currently no place in Iraq where these people can live.”



The full text of the open letter is available here:
<https://wadi-online.de/2023/11/15/offener-brief-abschiebung-von-jesidinnen-und-jesiden-sofort-stoppen>



A SEMINAR WITH CHILDREN ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS

The letter concludes with the following words: “Let us all show together that Germany is no longer the country for which the legal term of genocide was found, but a country that stands on the side of the weak and those in need of protection.”

That is the minimum that could be expected or hoped for. After all, “never again” isn’t far off. These days there are again increasing warnings that there could be another threat of genocide in Sudan, where a bloody civil war has been raging for months and from which

seven million people have fled so far, namely in the Darfur region - carried out by the successors of the notorious Janjaweed. Militia groups there have previously committed such massacres and crimes against civilians that prompted the International Criminal Court to file charges of alleged genocide.

This is the bitter reality in the region where we have been working for over thirty years. There are many reasons why such crimes keep happening. One thing is certain: to this day, far too little is remembered about what happened in

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the past. That's exactly why we support various projects that deal with remembering and coming to terms with the terrible crimes of the Saddam regime in Iraq. Most recently, we were able to design a "memory trail" through Halabja together with our local partners, which will be inaugurated next year. This time only our employees from Kurdistan and Iraq will have their say. We had a lengthy conversation with two of our teams and translated this for you.

This impressively expresses the difficult conditions under which the work of Wadi and our partner organizations takes place on site, but also that in the midst of all the horror there is hope, change is possible and giving up is not an option.

As we write year after year, this is our maxim, and in 2023 we were able to remain true to it, of course thanks to your solidarity support, and we want to do the same next year.

On behalf of all of our employees, I would like to thank you very much for your help and wish you a happy holiday and a happy new year.

PROJECTS IN GERMANIAN AND ERBIL

INTERVIEW WITH LAYLA AHMED AND PAYAM AHMAD

An interview with the long term team members from Wadi, **Layla Ahmed** and **Payam Ahmad**, who have been working for years in the regions of Germanian and Erbil share their thoughts and experiences. These projects are supervised by **Shokh Mohammed** and **Isis Elgibali**.

Isis: Can you introduce yourself and tell me a little bit about what you do at Wadi?

Layla: Hi! My name is Layala Ahmed, I am from Garmian Kurdistan, my work with Wadi is focused on various projects with women and children in the area. Our playbus project brings awareness for children on various topics like health and environment. We also provide awareness seminars for women on their health and we are working on the living with FGM program which focuses on women who are cut to to provide support.

We have a project specifically for the environment where we discuss the global and local environmental issues and what solutions locally can be found for some of these problems. This is a very inclusive project because we work with men and with boys and women and girls in the community to find the best solutions for the environmental projects. Another project that we are working on is the topic of raising awareness on social and legal levels on social issues that are taking place in the society and giving legal advice on laws that are available here in the country.

Isis: As a follow up to that question, what are some issues that people come to you about time and time again through your work? How would you define the big issues in your region?

Layla: Overall right now what we are observing is that the situation is not good because there are a lot of financial difficulties – people are not being paid their wages and that naturally contributes to how the social situations are going. Even

on a farming level, people that live in villages are not making any money, and they are thinking of leaving their farms and going to the cities to try to make money.

One of the most common issues that affects women is that they ask about medical information, because they have lack of access to doctors, so they always ask if our teams can bring doctors:

Isis: Speaking of women and information about their bodies, you mentioned that you have been working with the FGM project, what are some of the struggles and successes that you have personally encountered through this project?

Layla: So yes indeed there have been a lot! I have worked on the FGM project since 2005 so I have seen so many things, however in the past two years with the Living with FGM program I have seen that things have been more difficult than all the years that I have been working on prevention and awareness. The difference is that in the 'Prevention Seminars' we don't go into all the details because there are many people participating so we keep the discussion at a specific level.

In the 'Living with FGM' sessions its totally different and a new experience for us as well because we are trying to find ways to address deeper issues and to especially when it comes to intercourse and sexual relations and one of the big issues that we came across in the groups was that there were women who were



**WADI STAFF ON THE GROUND:
AWARENESS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS**



**PAYAM AHMED HAWEZ
(34) IS A LAWYER
FROM ERBIL AND HAS
BEEN A MEMBER
OF THE WADI TEAM
FOR FIVE YEARS.**

married and those who were not married. Those that were married were refusing to share any details about sex with those that were unmarried due to deep cutting social pressures. They did not want the unmarried girls to be 'corrupted' or to be taught everything about sex before marriage. So this was really a struggle.

Isis: Hi Payam, so glad the internet finally worked! Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do at Wadi?

Payam: Hello! I am Payam Ahmed. I am from Erbil, and I am a lawyer. I have been working with Wadi since 2018. Our work is very versatile as we work to provide awareness seminars in the city. We focus a lot on school areas and we also work in remote areas and villages. We can tell from all our work in Erbil city

and the villages that surround it that FGM is unfortunately still going on. There are many other issues especially this year we highlighted the issue of cyberbullying and mental and psychological violence much more than previous years, on a positive note we started the Playbus Project which was really well received and the teams love this project as well.

Isis: Speaking of violence, can we talk a little bit about the follow up to the 'No to violence' Project?

Layla: In Garmian we are still running the project on social media, but even though the school year has started, people are protesting and not going because they are not receiving their wages. So unfortunately we have not been able to do any activities.

Payam: We are also in good contact with the schools that we were working with before, there is a lot of demand from the schools, but we are trying to find ways to still stay active on this topic. The situation in schools right now is really bad, and the issue of violence online and cyber bullying is really affecting the kids. We would really like to get this project running more actively.

Isis: Yes, it's a great project and we are actively looking for funds, because there is a really big need for this project.

Shokh: Each school needs to have a council and they are always asking Wadi to join but right now it's not possible for us to join and participate.



**LAYLA AHMED WALI
HAS BEEN ADVISING
PEOPLE IN THE
REMOTE VILLAGES
OF THE GARMIAN
REGION FOR TEN
YEARS.**

Isis: Let's switch gears a little bit, can you share some of your experiences with the citizenship approach in some concrete examples?

Layla: I can give you the examples of two villages that we worked with, they both used to be clean and not have issues with trash being collected. But lately there was a big decline and there was tons of trash everywhere, so we as teams asked around what is the problem why is the trash not being collected.

People explained that the municipality stopped collecting the trash, so it just stayed there making the environment really horrible for everyone. We as a team

decided that we will visit the municipality if the people are ready to work with us as a community to clean the village.

The municipality was happy that wadi was initiating the first contact to help out this village, and go back to the village and choose a place where we can set up a trash collection point for the village, If people abide by the rules and don't throw their trash everywhere then the municipality will continue to work and pick up the trash.

Wadi also made a big billboard explaining the collection point and the new system for everyone so it was really clear. It was such a small thing, and it had a big effect on not just these two villages but on the neighboring 7-8 villages that also decided to participate and clean up their areas.

Shokh: Yeah just to add to that, the municipality also agreed to provide containers for more remote villages, so everyone can put their trash in them and they can pick it up regularly. We don't have the containers yet, but they have been ordered for 2024.

Payam: Unfortunately in Erbil the awareness about what it means to be a citizen is very low. One time we tried to make a similar project in a village, people were throwing trash right outside their door, we tried to explain how dangerous and unhealthy that was, and we tried to talk to people asking them if we work with the municipality to set up a trash collection point, will you participate and take your trash there?



**THE PLAYBUS: HELP THAT BRINGS JOY
AND HAS AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT**

It seemed like there was some community will so we went ahead and made contact with the municipality and set everything up. But once things got going so many people were just complaining that the trash truck was not coming close enough to their house. So they refused to take it to the collection point. So it was really frustrating to see that people just don't care about their health and their environment. So I think there is a real need to talk about citizenship and what does it actually mean in practice?

Shokh: I would like to add that right now we are in a shifting situation because

right now the whole society is kind of changing and there is the question of integrity, the question of do we really need the government to tell us not to throw away this bottle on the street?

What is our responsibility as citizens to our place? The government is not sitting here, I am! So it's a question of responsibility to your area as a citizen and also being able to organize yourself, like the example from Layla, how do we organize ourselves to do something that is good for our community, but without expecting something in return?

... IT'S A QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUR AREA AS A CITIZEN.

SHOKH MOHAMMED

When we do something it's for the whole community. I'll give you another example; there is a river and a lot of people die in this area as it's dangerous, and the government set up a diver's team, but they did not give them any equipment, nothing. So they cannot really function. But on a volunteer basis 150 men who had trained to be divers on their own, they set up their own community group and they are helping out, and they crowd-funded and got diving equipment, a boat and oxygen, and now they help out. The concept of citizenship is extremely novel, and very strange, because you are used to just blaming the government here, but it's like taking revenge on your land because the government is not taking care of you. This is why we are really considering on how to integrate this approach into all our projects at Wadi.



PRODUCTS MADE IN THE HALABJA RECYCLING CENTRE

Isis: Thank you all, I have a small question for Payam who was not able to answer before because of the poor internet, but what are some issues that people are coming to you in your area of work in Erbil and surrounding villages?

Payam: From our side people really like work they can see! For example the playbus it's something they can immediately see the effects of. However it's a bit more tricky with things like the awareness seminars, because sometimes we have difficulty getting women to come, but once they start they become really engaged with the topics and they don't want to leave and they do come back. It's the same thing with men, when we approach them they say 'what do you have to say to me??' But when they sit down and they talk about their issues, and they engage with the awareness topics they really see the value, and say 'this was really good, please come back'. So it's a lot of the time like that. The projects that start with awareness, might be more complicated for people to understand, but people really get a lot out of it and it increases their participation and their desire for information.

Isis: Just a quick final thought from Layla and Payam is there something you would like to share with the supporters of Wadi?

Layla: Thanks to all the donors and supporters of Wadi, we have been working on social awareness in various sectors

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PAYAM AHMED HAWEZ

within this society for many years, but after the pandemic things have really gone down well for our communities. The declining economic situation has contributed to the increase of violence. Every year its rising more and more and people are becoming desensitized to the violence, and even when it comes to the environment there is not enough awareness for people to realize oh things are falling apart around us, and we really feel that there is constant work and we really want to make our society a better place for everyone and we hope that people keep supporting us so we can do that.

**... WE HAVE NEVER
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LAYLA AHMED WALI

Even nowadays we are seeing a new type of violence in Garmian, something that we have never seen before, now it's slowly becoming a phenomenon that people are selling their kids. Last week we had a case where a mother and foather sold 3 of their kids each one for 1,500 USD, we never had that before. Even typical domestic violence was much lower, and now its so high, its really shoking, even rape and sexual harrasement has gone up and its a huge concern for us.

Payam: We really really need long term support. In Erbil there are many many NGOs but very few of them are working for the host community, most NGOs are working to help refugees and IDPs, and although they need help, this has created a huge gap in services for the host community and Wadi is one of the very few who are focused on helping the local community.

Also with regards to FGM it has decreased quite a bit in Erbil, before when we did our awareness seminars people were so convinced that FGM was a good thing. But now there are much fewer people doing it, and people know that it's illegal, and we think that they are doing it in secret now.

It's really important for the environment to understand that people only care about the state of their own house, everything inside the house is clean and that is the boundary where they stop and they don't feel responsible about anything outside of that. So yes, Erbil looks modern and progressive, but the mentality really needs a lot of work to change. This is a good chance now to do this work.

Isis: Thank you all for sharing your insights and experiences and thoughtful responses and thank you for all that you are doing.

DOCUMENTATION PROJECT IN CHAMCHAMAL INTERVIEW WITH MAMOSTA HEMN

This interview is carried out with the purpose of providing details and insight to our Documentation project that is currently running in Chamchaml, and the coordinator for this project is **Mamosta Hemn**, we wanted this interview to serve as a general update and also showcase the citizenship approach in which this project is based on.

Shokh: Can you introduce yourself and your projects?

My name is Hemn Abdullah I was born in Goptapa village in 1984, my family by chance escaped the Anfal Campaign and we went to live in Ranya. In 1992 we came back to Goptapa, I was in 2nd grade. I finished the other stages of school in the town of Koya and other districts because my village did not have the other facilities beside primary school. It was very challenging to finish school and continue learning but we did our best to learn as much as we can, to be of service to our areas.

In 2008, I graduated from the Teaching institute and then I returned back to my village (Goptapa) and worked as a teacher in one of the schools. As for my work with WADI, back in 2009, we worked together on building a public library in Goptapa village. We formed a team of youth with the support of Dr. Taha Rasul by the name “Goptapa Committee for development”, I was responsible for its public relations and head of the group. Due to this work, I formed many contacts with people and organizations outside my village and area.

Later, I got introduced to Jalal Mohammed who was the Editor in chief for Anfalstan newspaper, he also became the link that introduced us to WADI who came to the village and managed to do some projects in the area which was very warmly received by the people. From the beginning, Wadi was very happy to support a pre-established group of youth like we had in the area. They helped the group to grow more and become a group that works on more than one village and one area.

Through Wadi we managed to learn more about the other areas who were affected by the chemical bombs and work with them through forming Spi Organization which focused on areas affected by the chemical weapons. For several years, we worked on these areas and our representative met the German consulate and we went to many other places in Kurdistan.

Another project with Wadi that I am very proud of is our work in Aghjalar sub-district and the surrounding villages, one is supporting students' transportation through a bus for villages where their schools were shut down. The government was supposed to open a better and bigger school in the area, but it never happened. They also did not provide any way of transportation for students. Thankfully, in 2009, Wadi with my coordination we managed to arrange transportation for students in Tutaqal, Dar-aquta and other villages around Mamlese area; through the bus students were being collected and transported to a school closer to their area.

This project was so great because we were also working on supporting the parents in order to send their children to school. I don't think even the government can do a job like Wadi did because this project was so effective. Now, all the students who Wadi supported are university graduates and some are working as teachers in their areas. This is a great honor and the effects can be seen.

In here, two things are very much neglected which are education and public health. I have data that shows of all the 63 registered villages in the area, there are 5 health clinics and one health center.

Furthermore, another project I am currently doing with Wadi is the documentation of the unseen pictures of the victims of Anfal Campaign in the area. For people this is a great historical project. I can say Aghjalar, Askar, Jalamord, Gop-tapa, Kani Hanjer have the largest historical archives in Kurdistan because back in the days, there was a famous photographer here named Haji Kaka Aulla. This work started through a friend of mine his name was Jauhar Kani Hanjere, he informed me that there are important materials to archive since I was already working in media and photography, he suggested for me to do the archiving.

Now, we are actively working through Wadi's support and coordinating with authorities and relevant departments and universities.

I believe we have now reached a crucial point where the project has passed beyond the local frame and is heading towards an international level. So far, we were able to create a number of good quality documentaries like "The Unseen Pictures of Anfal Campaign" that has won 16 awards. Currently I am working on 3 other documentaries. For now, a Brazilian team has contacted us to translate our work to Portuguese, French and Spanish and this team soon will visit Wadi.

**...THIS IS A LONG-
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MAMOSTA HEMN

Shokh: thank you for that information, I really want people to know the details of the documentation project I hope you can elaborate later. I really see so much power and will in your activities, why are you so passionate about this work?

I have a lot of passion and love for this work, because I am a photographer and, I am also a history teacher, I understand and value the importance of documentation. I remember when I first saw the old picture of my grandfather, I felt so much joy. Imagine how nice it would be for someone who took a photo at the age of six and then seeing that picture again when they turn 30 or 40.

In the future these people would pass away and all their stories would remain along with the tradition and culture of the area. For example, if you look at an old photo of a Kurdish lady wearing the Kurdish clothes, you won't see any traces of Arabic or Western type of influence. I

believe there are many angles of this project that can be worked on using many mediums. Although this is a slow progressing project, each step we take is a milestone.

Recently, a British university also showed interest in supporting me to study this work on academic levels in the UK. Only due to the language limitations I am unable to take the offer. I do think in the future it is important for wadi to take some archiving trainings on academic levels to further develop the project.

Shokh: So, would you please tell us how do you work on the documentation project?

Like I said, this is a long-term project. We currently are working with six villages Goptapa, Askar, Kani Hanjer, Gilnaghaj, Jalamord and Tutaqal. Archiving has been completed for three villages. Usually in every house it takes time to scan everyone's photos because the equipment (scanner/computer) are limited and they take 3 to six minutes to be processed and sometimes the families have many members.

My purpose for this project is for people to know that this project belongs to them, not to me or wadi or anyone else. Let me tell you, many times when people bring me their photo albums, beneath the new photos there are so many old photos. Believe me, there are people whose entire family fell victim to the Anfal-Campaign, but they still trust me to scan their pictures and documents. That's why creating trust is vital for this project.

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MAMOSTA HEMN

I also never separated myself from the people. Although I currently live in Sulaymaniyah however I return back to Goptapa at least one or two times in a week. Furthermore, I have a good relationship with relatives of those who are in the photos, and have good coordination with relative authorities and education departments. I have explained to them the importance of this project. Fortunately, they are helpful and we have all the needed coordination to implement this project. Additionally, there is the house of someone named Jalal who have many victims of Anfal in their family, he is ready to specify and donate a land for this project if we could use it as monument in the future. This is all due to people viewing it as their own project.

Another important point is that right now there are some media outlets who understand and know the importance of these projects like Rudaw, whom I select various stories for and they make docu-

mentary out of it. So far, we did two features in Goptapa and Jalamord and next work will be in Askar. Hence, it is very important to relay those stories through cinema because it is a universal language.

Nowadays I am trying to establish a good connection with some educational institutes within Kurdistan especially the history departments in various universities.

Shokh: Mamosta Henm, from what we see now within the youth, there is little interest about history and past, they maybe more interested in new innovations and future outlooks. In your opinion how important is it to involve the youth in such projects to divert their attention back to history?

I believe this project transcends addressing just history and archiving, it addresses environment too. When the Anfal campaign happened, it did not just kill people. It killed animals, plants, contaminated water sources, in Goptapa we used to have a large green space and all of them were affected. In Goptapa village we have a statue named "Scream" that showcases all the animals who were also affected by the chemical weapons. That's why, we can work on ideas like when those archived pictures are returned to their families and homes, we also plant a tree in their homes signaling the return of their loved one(s).

Through projects like these, we will be able to bring back prosperity to these



WADI MEMBERS HEMN ABDULLAH AND SHOKH MOHAMMED

areas and improve their environment too. We can create individuals who feel responsibility to not harm their environment and keep it clean. We must work on influencing a generation to feel accountable and responsible towards their homes, streets, towns and villages. I am emphasizing on towns and villages because unfortunately in the cities you see many places for example like bus stations that are all damaged. That's why we need to work on creating responsible individual from primary stages in schools. I want to encourage every single child in my area and teach them to respect the facilities that they have, despite all the shortcomings that there are.

Like the people my age, we all finished school with much hardships and now we work as teachers. So, we really need to teach children now to be better and healthier people and improve their environment and situations. From my observations, there is a lot of man power and desire to work and learn in this area especially when it comes to voluntary work.

For example, in Goptapa we have a group of 150 young volunteers, who are ready to work on anything that is benefiting the village and the area, they really exceed expectations with how active they are.

It is also the same reason I am here today because I want to help and encourage many people like me who can represent their areas and work for them. Last week I asked Wadi if they can support a small-scale football championship, but my request was not only from Wadi and thankfully we managed to get good funds for it somewhere else.

Shokh: As Wadi all our projects are people-centered (from people to people) because we believe a responsible individual would turn in to a good citizen. I want to ask what do you think of when you hear the term citizenship?

There is a huge difference between those who work on volunteer bases and those who work as job in a governmental sector. In a job, you do your duties and you get paid. But with volunteer work, you're not bound by time, place or specific duties. For example, our team of divers, when someone drowns in the river, the team is there from dusk till dawn, but as a job one might just leave after their working hour is finished. This is the difference between being a citizen and an employee.

That is why our project with Wadi always had a citizenship approach because we never stopped working despite not having funds and we continued and endured harsh conditions. Also, by day people support this project more and more and it makes me very happy when we work with a citizen mindset to serve our societies.

Shokh: My next question is related to volunteering, what do you think is need to be done as civil society organizations or in general to increase and encourage the youth for voluntary work?

I would say is it important to mingle with people in the area, get to know their culture, religion, get an understanding of their situations on social levels. Unfortunately, if you look at the data from directorate of non-governmental NGOs, you will see there are hundreds of NGOs who are nothing but a name or have been created for specific purposes and intents. Of course, I don't mean to belittle their work because I think the work NGOs do is good. However, they are not focusing on the remote areas. Unlike Wadi as they have the least amount of activity within the city-centers. This is really important. With Anfalstan, we used to say we work around the year for the case of Anfal Campaign, however on the 16th of March (the day it happened), we will be silent. In contrast, all the NGOs who worked on Anfal case were silent throughout the year but were active on that day.

That is why the fact that Wadi works in remote areas in Garmayn, Ranya and other districts and sub-districts, their effect can be seen. Back in the days, I spoke to five children and they were asking for toys to play with. Based on their requests we were able to set up a small playground in the area. That is why this project was considered as people's project.

In Kurdistan there are so many active people but they need to assembled in an

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association. In my area, I can create good teams of young people in each village. Again, I emphasize that Wadi needs to increase their activities in Chamchamal area especially in the education and health sector, mainly focusing on raising awareness on health topics like women's health. It is really important to empower women and girls in our area. I believe women live in much harder conditions than men in this society

Shokh: Mamosta Hemn it feels like you know my next question already, I want to ask from a man's perspective what do you think is needed to be done by women for developing the area and how to increase their participation?

Well, the standards are very different from city centers to remote area. For example, if you go out in the morning and return back home at 4pm it would be okay, but for women in villages they cannot leave their houses for an hour without permission. Awareness raising is very needed in this area. I believe before even working with the women, a team needs to first address awareness raising with men especially in regards to women. Because there are so many men who never once read or watched a program about women's health or reproductive health. That's why I think a mobile health team is much needed to inform men about the physical and psychological aspects of women.

Women have a very difficult job, with house work, child rearing despite all that work there are men who beat their wives. I suggest to involve even the religious leaders and use Friday speech for awareness in regards women's rights and environment. I don't think we did enough work to empower women in the villages. For example: there women in my village who love sports and they have the physical abilities and talents to do it. but there are no opportunities to pursue this desire. So, they just leave it. I think we should also think about creating female volunteer groups, there are good conditions for it.

Shokh: Mamosta Hemn you are definitely trying to be an exemplary citizen, I want you to share with us a success story in your area, how did you solve a problem or managed to assist your community in a specific situation?

In Chamchamal we created a group of young volunteers called “RA” (meaning opinion) they also work on managing a page of Facebook. In this group there are representatives from Chamchamal, Takya, Shorish, Aghjalar and other districts. Through this group we gathered the inputs and needs of these areas and presented them to relevant parties and authorities. We recently met with Qubad Talabani and we took with us the manager of Goptapa library who was the only woman in the group and presented the needs of the area. Soon after, they came to help with the needs and they are now at final stages. Had we not gone there and asked for the support, the government would not have initiated the contact. So, it is really important for the youth to take their needs to relevant parties and to keep trying even if their requests got rejected.

In Goptapa village, we have a group of volunteers specific for the village and we have a social media page for the activities of the village. Many media outlets contact us through the page if they can reuse our materials. Similarly, there is a huge working force in this village because we have many farming fields and on daily based the youth who work there make videos and they send it to the page.

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We also have a section to introduce active people within the area. In this way we encourage these people to stay active in their respective fields. I hope other villages and area take these ideas from Goptapa and implement them in their own villages.

Another example would be the Goptapa bridge. It was constructed back in 2013-2014. However, there were no facilities like electricity and it was not even dyed. But through a request from our social media page, within two days, we managed to bring the relevant authorities on board and we used their equipment to clean the bridge, provide electricity and dye the bridge. So, it really is our attempts that brings prosperity and development to our villages.

Shokh: like you said these activities are useful indeed. Do you think these activities will help making responsible individuals on a long run?

Yes indeed. We have many examples. Like our divers' team. In our Area, there is a governmental divers' team that has been established four years ago in Aghjalar, but they don't have a boat even, yet their main job is to save people in the river. For our volunteer group of divers, we used our social media page to request for support as they had no equipment and still, they were assisting people. Thankfully, we managed to get them the needed support. We even managed to get a boat for the Aghjalar's diver team. That's why I believe even a small comment on Facebook is a huge support for those young men.

I believe this is a great example. We really need to go beyond the complains about political parties, shortcomings from government, we as citizens must not lack when it comes to caring for our areas. It is me who lives in my village and if it has a good environment and clean air, I am the one benefiting from it. if I supported the school in my village, my kids will get the benefit and not the government. Hence, we need to build accountable individuals who feel responsible towards their society.

Shokh: What are the challenges you faced doing this work?

On personal levels, I gave a lot of time for this project and not given enough

time to my family. However, it is a great honor because history will tell my children about what their father has done for his community. I know I may not receive the deserving compensation for all the work I do, but I know how proud my children would be of me when people know who their father is and for me this respect is priceless. There were times where I was arrested too. One time I was arrested for doing a photography work and thankfully Wadi and Omer Mohammed, managed to intervene and then I was released and I received an apology.

So naturally every job has its own challenges but at times for me it feels harder. Because I am a father, a teacher and I devoted my time to serve the youth in my area and I feel responsible to support their growth. Kurdistan is also unstable and the conditions of work keep on changing. However, I am very proud of the little services that I managed to do for my community. I can only hope people are satisfied with the work that I do.

Shokh: What are your suggestions for projects and works that would further develop the area?

I believe focusing on two major areas like education and public health is vital for this area to develop. If we have a good education, we would have healthy individuals mentally and physically. They in turn would be able to do good work, and by contrast, if they are not well educated or healthy, they cannot do a good job. That is why I believe any society that has a good education system is a healthy society.

If possible, I suggest to set up mobile health awareness team and to consist for example of one Wadi staff and two other local staff from the area itself and take their activities to the villages, out of the 63 villages in the area 40 of them are habitant and active. For all these villages there are only 6 health clinics and 1 health center. What about everyone else?

If these teams are trained academically, they would be able to train workers at the health clinics, they would be able to address farmers on the effects of pesticides and fertilizers on their health and crops.

Furthermore, it would be great to do projects that is focusing on children. Here children up to age of six all they see of amusement park is in form of advertisement on TV, which is a huge psychological torture for children in villages. If you ask children in villages, where do they want to go in the city, the first thing they say is the amusement park. That is why it is important to pay extra attention to children's needs before the age of six.

I think what Wadi is currently doing with the PlayBus project is so great because the bus takes the toys and the projects to them aiming for villages that are remote and have no services, there is really not enough praise to this project that I can give.

I am representing my area because I have visited every village. For example, in Jalamord village that has around 150 families 478 people of them were victims in Anfal Campaign. They have the largest

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number of victims for one location in Kurdistan. This village used to have a health clinic and school which both are closed currently. There are no more facilities to encourage living in this village anymore, and few houses and families are left in the village. Despite this, there are people who say even if they die, they would not leave the village. There is an old lady in Goptapa village, Aunt Aish, who lost 19 members of her family in Anfal campaign. The government gave her a land in chamchamal, but she rejected and said "even if they gave me the whole of Chamchamal, I won't leave Goptapa till I die".

It is really unfortunate so many people left their villages, because the government built residential units for them in the cities. As a result, a huge decrease of man power occurred and the loss of business of farming and cattle and local products. They made people into only consumers with no production.

Now, there are too many people in the towns and cities, the government cannot provide enough electricity, services or even enough water sources. Last year, in Chamchamal, every 15 days water was provided to people.

Officially Goptapa is one of very few villages that has a reversed migration. People are returning from the cities to the village, because Goptapa has vast lands suitable for farming. We have people who are living in Erbil and Taqtaq and Koya, who own fishing fields in Goptapa or bought a land and created jobs for several young men to work on the farming fields.

I believe the more we invest in the youth's skills and abilities the better.

SOLIDARITY AND HELP IN DIFFICULT TIMES

We would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all institutions, donors and friends who have supported our work over the years and made it possible.

We kindly ask you to continue to stand by our side, so that we can continue to implement our concept of solidarity-based development cooperation. Time and again we see it on the ground: What counts is patience, continuity and unrelenting efforts. Change takes time.

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Published by
wadi e.V.
Herborner Straße 62,
Germany
60439 Frankfurt/Main
Registered in Frankfurt,
Nr. 0176

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