

# Peace and Freedom Organization

## منظمة السلام والحرية



## Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020

## الخطة الاستراتيجية 2017 – 2020

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## Introduction

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Peace and Freedom Organization is a non-governmental organization that was founded 2013 but did not start concrete work before 2015.

It is currently officially registered in the NGO Directorate office of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq.

The organization works along two main tracks:

- Peace-Building and Protection of Diversity
- Protection of Human Rights and Strengthening Freedoms

While the organization did not have a specific strategic plan as it started its operations, the board of directors has recently taken the official decision to design and adopt a clear strategy which will guide the work of the organization.

Peace and Freedom organization has therefore taken necessary steps in order to develop a strategic plan for the coming period of time going from 2017 until 2020.

The organization recognizes that the strategic plan is a needed tool to ensure the existence of a clear mandate and work objectives and so that available human, administrative and financial resources can be adequately allocated and used to maximizing the fulfillment of expected results.

Peace and Freedom Organization is also concerned about drastic context changes occurring in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region as well as in the wider Middle East Region which must be taken into account as the members of the organization are designing the mandate and the programs of the NGO.

This strategic plan document is the outcome of a workshop that was held in Erbil on August 10 and 11, 2016, which brought together 10 members of the organization. As members discussed the current dynamics impacting on the political, economic and social situation of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, they furthered conducted brainstorming to design the objectives and work strategies of the two main programs of the organization. A SWOT analysis of the organization was undertaken in order to set priorities in regards to steps needed in order to ensure continuous institutional development of the organization.

This strategic workshop was a participatory process that aimed to ensure that all members of the organization are actively involved in the development of the organization and develop a strong sense of belonging and dedication to achieving the goals set for the organization.

The strategic plan of the organization will be presented in the first General Conference that is planned to be held on September 21<sup>st</sup> 2016 in Erbil.

## History of the organization

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### **Reason for existence**

Peace and Freedom Organization is dedicated to developing a society respecting the fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms and promoting a culture of non-violence and peaceful conflict resolution.

In 2013, a group of academics, thinkers and journalists gathered and founded the organization in a wish to address the increasing restrictions to individual and collective freedoms and violations committed against human rights across Iraq. They were as well concerned about the un-ability of the community at large to address conflicts in a positive manner, resulting in ever-increasing cycles of violence impacting the social fabric on the long-term.

Peace and Freedom Organization is dedicated to developing a true membership-based non-governmental organization which will develop a strong constituency of community members who will be given a large role in guiding the work of the organization. The first general conference of the organization will be organized on September 21<sup>st</sup> 2016, on the occasion of the International Day of Peace, which will be an opportunity to present the new strategic plan of the organization. Members of the organization will have an opportunity to provide input to the strategic plan and the yearly work-plan. The organization will also be able to draw support from volunteers among the membership base.

### **Initial Steps and Achievements**

Peace and Freedom Organization focused at the start on producing reports on the human rights situation: in 2014, it released its first report on the freedom of expression in Iraq and Kurdistan Region to be presented in the frame of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

PFOK further trained organizations across the Kurdistan Region on freedom of expression and formed a network “the ambassadors of freedom” which now works together with PFOK to monitor violations and to conduct a baseline research on the status of freedom of expression in the Kurdistan Region. The research together with a yearly report on violations will be released by the end of 2016.

PFOK developed cooperation with the Human Rights Commission in Kurdistan and provided capacity building to its members in regards to the Right to Information Law. Mechanisms to implement the law are now being developed by the Commission.

PFOK is as well concerned on transparency matters related to the management of oil and gas resources and provided training skills to journalists across the Kurdistan Region.

PFOK recently launched work related to the rights of workers and freedom of syndicates as monitoring of violations of worker’s rights will be launched across Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

PFOK has supported the “Kulluna Muwatinun” (We are All Citizens) initiative striving to promote diversity and protection of minorities in Iraq by supporting the young

people representing diverse ethnic and religious communities to engage in advocacy initiatives and strengthening dialogue with political leaders. While visits to the Iraqi Parliament and the Prime Minister of the KRG's office for a group of young people, youth advisory councils were formed and trained in the governorates of Ninewa, Kirkuk and Basra.

Finally, PFOK has worked with journalists from recently liberated areas of Ninewa (Zummar, Sinoune, Rabiaa and Wana), training them on peaceful journalism. They have created a Facebook page in which articles promoting peace and peaceful co-existence are shared on a daily basis and have gathered more than 17.000 followers.

In just 2 years, PFOK has extended its work across the Kurdistan Region and is now reaching out to other parts of Iraq including Baghdad, Kirkuk and Basra. It has developed key strategic partnerships with international organizations such as Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), PAX and Un Ponte Per (UPP).

## Current Context

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### **Political situation**

Since 2003, the Iraqi Government has been weak in organizing its foundations and has heavily suffered from diverse kind of conflicts including sectarian and political conflict among the different parties.

The Iraqi Central Government as well as the Regional Kurdistan Government have not been able to develop a civil state. There is no clear separation between the legislative, executive and judicial authorities and the executive authority centralizes all powers which threatens the existence of any kind of democracy.

The Central Government lacks strength in imposing rule of law across the country and tribes, in particular in the south and center of Iraq remain very powerful. This leads to many issues when implementing laws as tribes often interpret laws in their own fitting way.

Sectarian politics have often given favor to some particular community groups over the others and has opened the door to violence and radicalization of the marginalized groups. This is in particular a root cause to the existence of the extremist group, the Islamic State, which is a direct reflection of the neglect of the participation of the Sunni community in Iraq since 2003. In a similar manner, minority groups have been neglected and although laws are providing basic protection, their political participation remains weak and discrimination is present.

Implementation of democratic processes across Iraq and the Kurdistan Region is lacking: while political participation of citizens remains limited, freedoms are severely restricted, media is heavily controlled, NGOs remain weak to monitor the work of the Government and there is a clear lack of understanding of the concept of citizenship.

Conflict between the Iraqi Central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Governmental runs high. While the agreement to manage oil resources has not yet been settled, the Central Government has refused to pay the yearly budget to Kurdistan since 2014. Geographical conflict regarding the disputed territories is

expected to soar as more territories will be liberated from the control of the Islamic State. In the last few months, the Kurdistan President has been more vocal about the possibility for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to become independent as a referendum could be conducted in the course of 2017.

Within the Kurdistan Region, conflict between the two main Kurdish political parties has seen growing instability in the zone that was considered as the safest in Iraq. Currently, the Parliament is not functioning until a solution is found.

## **Economic situation**

Iraq has suffered from an economic and monetary crisis since 2003 which is currently getting worse.

The economy of Iraq has been depending fully and exclusively on oil and gas industries and has not invested in developing other industries in the country. The recent plunging decrease of the price of oil has severely affected the economy and as a result, many projects have come to a stop in the previous few months.

No economic plan and strategy has been developed by either Iraq or the Kurdistan Region in regards to investments and developing local productions and the dependence on sole oil and gas revenues is representing a very large threat to economic stability.

There is no existing strategy or philosophy in regards to the delivery of basic services across the country and levels of services in regards to water and electricity in particular have been very poor.

Today, due to large scale war engaged against the Islamic State, military expenditures have been overwhelming both for Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. The war has also engendered displacement of millions of people across the country for which authorities are not able to provide decent living conditions.

The Iraq economy has been depending on large loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Monetary Bank (IMB), which has been having direct impact on citizens with the rise of taxes in order to allow reimbursement of the debts.

Iraq is classified in the top 10 most corrupted country in the world and corruption has proved to become a challenge in both Iraq and the Kurdistan Region and it has largely affected trust from citizens and private companies towards the National and Regional Government.

Laws in regards to workers' rights remain weak as no social system is available and basic rights are not being adequately protected. Many industries depend on foreign workers, especially Syrians, who can be employed with very low-scale salaries.

A trend of privatization of services, such as provision of water and electricity, is also considered a threat by citizens who see prices of services rising dramatically.

The above deteriorating economic situation has many negative impacts on citizens as poverty level across the country has been rising and increasing differences among the layers of the society has fueled social tensions. As work opportunities are not available, level of quality of basic services remain low, and security situation is decreasing with more crimes and thefts, social impacts are seen on the society.

Domestic violence has increased and young people are increasingly choosing emigration to seek for better economic opportunities.

Iraq and the Kurdistan Region need to develop economic plans which will favor local production while corruption should be addressed immediately. It is necessary that the government becomes accountable towards its citizens to foresee a better economic future.

## **Social situation**

The severe deterioration of the political, economic and security situation in Iraq has had severe impacts on the social level across the country and have generated numerous conflicts along religious, sectarian and political lines.

While several community groups have been marginalized for several years at a political as well as at a social level, ethnic and religious minority groups in particular have suffered from systematic discrimination and prejudices. Minorities became the target of extremist groups in 2014 as a large scale genocide was committed against the Yezidi community. While minorities have sought protection within the safer Kurdistan Region, many have taken refuge outside of Iraq and deeply affect the original diversity of Iraq. Community groups have also felt the need to ensure their own protection as the State proved unable to secure adequate protection for all. Sectarian militias have been formed ensuring protection of particular community and minority groups, leading to additional divides in the society.

Currently, more than 3 million Iraqis are displaced as they have escaped the violence of extremist groups and military operations and a majority is settled in the Kurdistan Region. The Iraqi and Kurdish Regional Governments are struggling to provide basic needs to this large population and humanitarian support is mainly brought in by international organizations. Tensions are raising between host and displaced communities as IDPs are seen as putting a burden on already scarce available resources. Fears related to diverse community groups settling in the Kurdistan Region have as well exacerbated social conflict.

The economic crisis linked with the large amount of displaced persons has seen the poverty level of Iraqi increasing. Lack of job opportunities and regular income has directly impacted on the increase of phenomena such as crime, theft, trafficking and violence against women. The young population in particular is offered a bleak future and many youths have been encouraged to emigrate to Europe to seek for a better future.

The use of guns and other small arms is rampant within the community and levels of available weapons in the country have raised since 2014 with the fight against the Islamic State as every family feels the need to ensure its protection. But this also increases the violence within the community and within families as disputes are solved by the use of violence, and women are often victims of this violence.

The patriarchal society which relies heavily on religious, cultural and tribal norms continues to severely restrict the freedom and the role of women within the society. The practice of early marriage of girls is on the rise especially within the displaced communities. Women remain the primary victims of conflict as it was witnessed during the attacks perpetrated by the Islamic State who sexually harassed and enslaved thousands of Yezidi women and girls.

## **Freedom and Human Rights**

The general situation related to freedom and human rights in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has been worsening in the recent years. The current deterioration of the security situation linked to the fight against extremism has led to additional restrictions of freedoms which is not being appropriately monitored by the Civil Society which is busy with the emergency situation.

Both Constitutions provide adequate protection of general freedom and human rights while Iraq has signed on several international conventions and treaties related to freedoms and human rights. Additionally, all recommendations presented to Iraq in the frame of the UPR were agreed upon by the Iraqi Government, however, violations of freedom and basic human rights continue to occur on a daily basis in Iraq.

In 2016, the Iraqi Parliament prepared two legislation drafts related to freedom of expression and right to be informed while the Kurdish Parliament adopted a law on demonstrations. These texts are severely detrimental to basic freedoms.

Existing legislations also suffer from the lack of enforcement which means that although texts provide protection and guarantees to freedom, they are not implemented as such in the daily life.

This situation has impacted the work of journalists in particular both in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region and many journalists were threatened, arrested or even killed while no condemnations of these acts were witnessed. The government and political parties continue to put pressure on journalists and severely restrict their right to inform the population on several key issues. Radical groups have adopted similar practices to prevent reports on violations and other opinions to be published.

Recently, popular demonstrations as well as conflict between political conflicts up-scaled the violations of rights and freedoms with deliberate arrests and beatings of individuals, civil society activists and journalists. Media channels have also been threatened and closed in some cases.

Syndicates are also restricted in their work as freedom to join syndicates is not granted and the establishment of professional unions and other organizations are not regulated by legislations in accordance with international standards.

Recent legislations were adopted to run civil society organizations both in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, however instructions being implemented are still dependent on ministers in charge and differ from the actual legislative text. It is clear that the government and political parties are attempting to limit the ability of these organizations to function and to report adequately on the situation of human rights and freedoms in general.

Finally, it is important to note that religious movements which hold a lot of power in Iraq are as well responsible for limiting the access to basic freedoms and human rights.

## Vision

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A peaceful, democratic and diverse society that guarantees human rights and freedoms for all and promotes values of social justice, citizenship and non-violence.

## Mission

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Peace and Freedom is a non-governmental and not-for-profit organization that works in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region to protect human rights and civil rights and ensure peaceful co-existence through promoting trust and collaboration between the diverse components of the society and supporting governmental and non-governmental institutions in developing policies guaranteeing freedoms, rights and social justice in accordance with international standards.

## Programs

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PFOK has identified two main program areas in which it will focus its work for the coming 4 years: Peace-Building and Social Cohesion; Freedoms and Human Rights.

The **Peace-Building and Social Cohesion program** aims to preserve the diversity of Iraq by building capacities of individuals and key stakeholders to resolve conflict and promote peace to ensure peaceful co-existence among communities of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds and ensure that adequate policies are developed to ensure protection and participation of all community groups.

The **Freedoms and Human Rights program** aims to shed light on violations of individual and collective rights and freedoms occurring across Iraq and ensure that adequate policies are developed to protect and promote these rights and freedoms.



## Program Strategies

Program	Strategy	Tools
<p align="center"><b>Peace-Building and Social Cohesion Program</b></p>	<p>1. Raise awareness and capacity of communities to engage in dialogue and promote peace with a particular focus on youth and members of displaced, refugee and host communities.</p>	<p>a. Awareness and capacity building of community members  b. Production of researches/studies  c. Engaging in common initiatives encouraging creation of relationships  d. Promotion of UNSCR2250: promoting role and participation of youth in peace processes</p>
	<p>2. Promote a positive role for parties engaged in spreading violence and hate speech such as religious leaders, journalists and other radicalized elements of the community.</p>	<p>a. Awareness and capacity building  b. Production of researches/studies  c. De-radicalization programs</p>
	<p>3. Engage in advocacy with local and national governmental authorities to develop policies ensuring protection of diversity, promotion of peaceful co-existence and participation of youth in particular in peace-building processes</p>	<p>a. Advocacy campaigns on key issues linked to diversity and peaceful co-existence  b. Production of studies / recommendations on policies, laws developed by authorities linked to protection of diversity, impacting peaceful co-existence and participation of youth in peace-building processes  c. Capacity building of key stakeholders</p>
	<p>4. Build alliances to promote peaceful co-existence and social cohesion in Iraq with other NGOs and networks</p>	<p>a. Capacity building of local NGOs  b. Develop joint program opportunities  c. Enhance coordination and cooperation among NGOs</p>

<b>Freedoms and Human Rights Program</b>	1. Raise awareness and capacities of community members with a particular focus on women, youth and minorities on key principles of human rights and freedoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Awareness campaigns</li> <li>b. Capacity building trainings</li> <li>c. Production of educational material</li> </ul>
	2. Engage in monitoring and reporting of violations of human rights and freedoms with a focus on minorities and worker's rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Building capacity of journalists and youth in particular in monitoring and reporting on violations</li> <li>b. Production of studies and researches on violations</li> <li>c. Disseminating knowledge of violations through media</li> </ul>
	3. Build capacity of non-governmental institutions to promote individual and collective rights and freedoms, NGOs and syndicates in particular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Capacity building trainings</li> <li>b. Coordination and networking</li> <li>c. Common advocacy campaigns</li> </ul>
	4. Engage in advocacy with governmental institutions to develop policies ensuring promotion of human rights and freedoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Capacity building trainings</li> <li>b. Advocacy campaigns</li> </ul>

## Recommendations / Priorities

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A SWOT analysis of the organization was conducted in order to identify the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization and the external threats and opportunities existing in order to develop the work of the organization.

The results of the analysis led to identifying a number of priorities for the organization that it will have to focus on in the coming period of time in order to develop its skills, enhance the structure of the organization and improve the quality and impacts expected to be reached.

Peace and Freedom Organization will consider these priorities as recommendations and will seek opportunities, internally, but as well in close cooperation with its current partners, to focus on making them a reality.

- PFOK should **review its administration and financial policies** in order to ensure that standard administrative and financial procedures in accordance with requirements of partners and donors are put in place. Official policies for the organizations should become adequately documented and available for sharing with partners and donors.
- PFOK should **put in place an administration and financial IT system** that will ease its management of administrative and financial matters and will enhance transparent management of the organization.
- **Additional capacity building of team members** is needed in diverse fields, especially in regards to: proposal writing, advocacy, strategic plan, TOT and facilitation skills, media communication, monitoring and evaluation, finance and administration. PFOK will look at organizing regular training opportunities internally as well as securing participation of its team members to trainings organized by third parties.
- While a **media and communication strategy** will need to be developed in order to enhance reach-out of activities and programs, PFOK will be looking at **developing a newsletter** sharing activities implemented by the organization. It should also ensure enhanced coordination with media and seek systematic opportunities to **participate and contribute to radio and TV shows**. PFOK will benefit from the experience of many members of the organizations who are journalists in this regard.
- PFOK should focus on **recruiting additional female staff members** in order to enhance the gender-balance within the organization.
- While PFOK is already officially registered in the Kurdistan Region, it should **undertake registration at the Central Government level**, especially as target areas of work have recently been extended to central and south Iraq.

- PFOK should **develop an internal strategy for fundraising and income generation**. Although sustainability is currently ensured until 2019, PFOK should enlarge its base of partners in order to develop the scope of its current work and strengthen its long-term sustainability. Additionally, PFOK should not rely only on external funding but should as well develop internal processes to ensure generation of resources to sustain its work.
- PFOK should **improve coordination and networking with other non-governmental bodies and organizations** by attending relevant UN cluster meetings and other coordination opportunities. Contact should be taken with relevant institutions which will lead to creating additional opportunities for partnerships.