



2020 ANNUAL REPORT



**DISRUPTING THE
DISINFORMATION
ECOSYSTEM**

“The Middle East is ground zero for misinformation and disinformation. It’s not just terrorist groups, it’s the regimes as well. Extremists use disinformation to discredit or to attack regimes or regimes will use it as a means of social control.

In this dire situation...the need is for people who are going to be truth tellers, the need is for people who are going to be strong and tough.

I think that IBB plays this role — a responsible, smart, non-partisan player. You could say IBB is a ‘virtual good Samaritan’ that has intellectual heft and social media savvy. IBB is a unique and valuable resource.”

Ambassador Alberto Fernandez

Former American diplomat and Ambassador to Sudan; Vice President, MEMRI



IBB's Mission and Vision

Ideas Beyond Borders (IBB) champions a positive alternative to the extremism, authoritarianism, censorship, and violence that plagues the Middle East. IBB shares, translates, and promotes ideas that foster Enlightenment values: freedom and responsibility, human rights, education and critical thinking, science and a scientific approach, and pluralism. IBB's ultimate goal is to bring to life a modern, pluralistic Middle East, led by the people of the region.



Ideas Beyond Borders Combats Covid Misinformation, Builds Followers and Saves Lives

Dear Friends of IBB,

While 2020 was a challenging year for every person and every country, it was a particularly perilous year for the citizens of the Middle East, and critical for their future. Authoritarians throughout the region sought to take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to increase their power and expand their control. This is their playbook: First, prevent access to the truth by restricting speech. Second, deploy disinformation to confuse and divide people through extremism and conflict.

Faced with these unprecedented and historic events, Ideas Beyond Borders rose to the challenge, doing more than perhaps any other organization to stop the spread not just of COVID-19, but the authoritarianism that sought to exploit it. Here are just some of our achievements:

- **Making the Inaccessible, Accessible.** IBB content increased by 67% last year, as we translated and produced nearly 20,000 books, articles and videos on our shared ideals of human rights, scientific discovery, democratic values, and religious pluralism.
- **Explosive Growth in Engagement.** Arab youth responded, making IBB a powerful alternative to state-controlled media. More than 29 million Arab youth engaged with IBB's content on Facebook.
- **Combating COVID-19 Disinformation.** IBB's *Stop the Spread* digital public education campaign engaged more than 30 million with facts about COVID-19, while dispelling myths and disinformation.
- **Saving Lives from COVID-19.** Given the life-and-death reality of COVID-19, simply advocating for the use of science was not enough. *Stop the Spread*'s humanitarian initiative in war-torn areas of Iraq provided masks and food, as well as the scientific information needed to equip people to stop the pandemic's spread. As a result, more than 750,000 meals and 140,000 high-quality masks were distributed.

These are significant achievements by any standard, but they are truly amazing for a three-year-old startup nonprofit. You made this possible. Together, we have built an organization that was prepared to act when the people of the Middle East needed us most.

Thanks to you, IBB turned a potentially disastrous year into a renewed opportunity to build a better future for the greater Middle East in 2021 and beyond. We look forward to the year ahead, and to facing down new challenges with you.

Sincerely,

Samuel P. Hershey

Samuel P. Hershey

Chairman of the Board of Ideas Beyond Borders



“At IBB, we get things done, and we don’t make excuses.”

Dear Friend of Ideas Beyond Borders,

For so many years, the voices of freedom and humanity were overshadowed by the voices of destruction and death in the Middle East and around the world.

2020 was a hard year on many fronts. Protestors were murdered, activists were kidnapped, and counter extremism analysts such as well-regarded Iraqi historian and security analyst Hisham Al Hashimi were assassinated in broad daylight.

In many parts of the world, instead of spreading a message of unity, authoritarians used the pandemic to impose more restrictions on freedom of speech and challenge political rivals, relying on an ecosystem of misinformation and disinformation built over decades.

In the face of all this, we decided to lead. Growing up during the civil war in Iraq, I was taught to find hope even when it is hard to find. Ideas Beyond Borders leads with that same spirit. We never give up even when things get difficult. In my opinion, “giving up” and “victimhood” are philosophies for the privileged, and they are not in our vocabulary.

At IBB, we get things done, and we don’t make excuses.

In this annual report, you will see this spirit in action, whether it was launching a multimedia campaign combating misinformation and conspiracy theories spread by those same authoritarians, translating the equivalent of 300+ books, our on-the-ground programs working with Middle Eastern universities or in providing people in war-torn areas with masks, food and educational materials to protect themselves from COVID-19 and the knowledge that there are people out there who really care about them.

I am amazingly proud of our team, which helped turn the vision of a better Middle East into reality in 2020. And I will forever be grateful to you, our donors and supporters, for your trust in us.

As you enjoy this report, I hope you can all see that your trust is warranted. Together, we can truly help the world.

Warmest Regards,

Faisal Al Mutar

Founder and Executive Director
Ideas Beyond Borders

MENA Youth Face Disinformation On Steroids

In 2020, disinformation and government-controlled information dominated the Middle East, inhibiting the public's understanding of the facts, whatever the topic: the pandemic, elections, and

more. China TV, Russia Today and regional state media are using disinformation as a strategic tool to propagate more division, hate, and ultimately, violence.

2020: The Year of the Big Lie



There is Ample Evidence of Fraud in the Elections
Andalou Agency, Turkish state run media



The Coming Wars of the Future: Will COVID-19 Be an American Industry?
al-jazeera



The Rothschild Family Secrets that Rule the World
hawaas.com

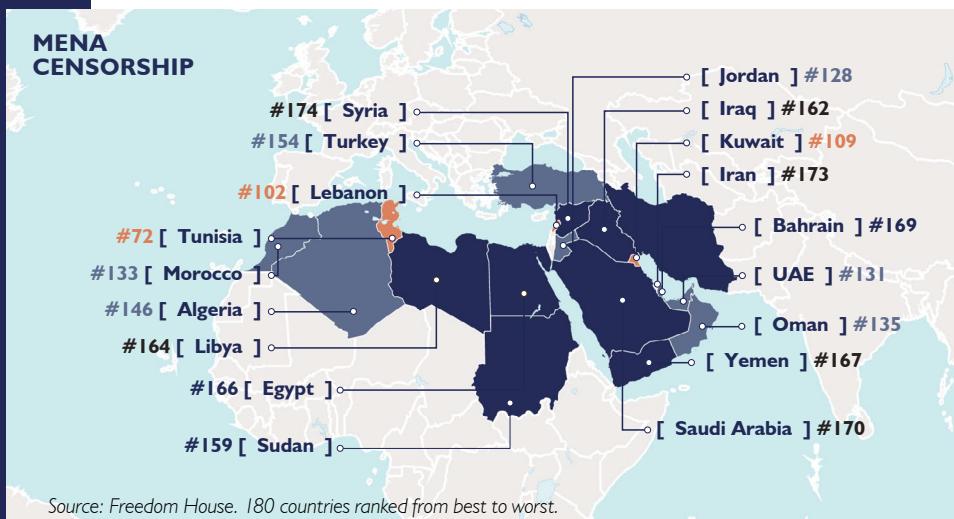


The Real Reason for Killing Soleimani: He Planned to take US Embassy Hostages in Baghdad
Almesryoon.com

Censorship Creates an Information Desert

Censorship by authoritarian regimes and sectarian extremists is a huge barrier to change in the Middle East. It results in devastating gaps

in knowledge for MENA youth, who are in turn ill-equipped to create the modern society they desire and deserve.



Source: Freedom House. 180 countries ranked from best to worst.

As of 2015, only 3% of online content was available in Arabic, even though Arabic is the fourth most spoken language among internet users.



IBB's Flagship Program: The House of Wisdom 2.0

Making the Inaccessible Accessible for MENA youth

The House of Wisdom 2.0, or Bayt Al Hikma 2.0 (BAH 2.0) in Arabic, is a revived, online, and modern version of the great library of Baghdad, the original Bayt Al Hikma, that served as a center for innovation, pluralistic thought, and scientific discovery during the last Middle Eastern Golden Age. BAH 2.0 aims to rekindle the pursuit of knowledge, enlightenment ideas, scientific revelation, and pluralistic thought that lays the groundwork for a new civil society across the region.

A Burgeoning, Thriving Online Community

Above all, BAH2.0 is a community for MENA youth to explore Enlightenment ideals and ideas, and ultimately bring them to life. MENA youth are taking action to educate themselves about what it takes to develop societies that value human dignity and individual worth, freedom of expression, non-sectarianism and pluralism, reason and science, and more.



A Go-to Source of Information

In 2020, BAH2.0 came into its own as a go-to source of online information, utilizing a multi-media communications strategy aimed squarely at cellphone-oriented MENA youth. Today, thousands of videos, books, podcasts and articles on human rights, the humanities, social science, and science are now completely free and available in Arabic.

Overcoming State Censorship and Ignorance Every Day

Before BAH2.0, regional authoritarians could prevent their populations from learning what it takes to develop a modern, enlightened society. But because IBB is headquartered in the US, MENA authoritarians can't easily shut BAH2.0 down.

Combating Disinformation and Promoting Critical Thinking

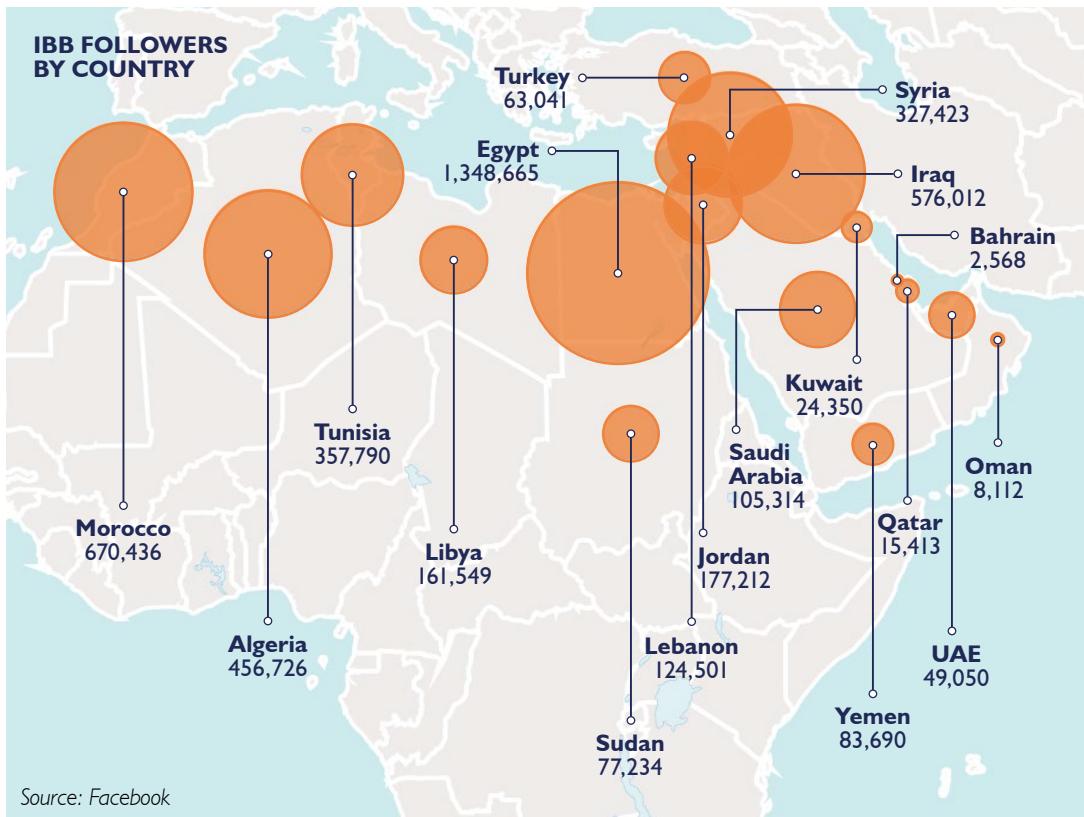
BAH2.0 combats disinformation by providing accurate information, and by educating millions of MENA youth about critical thinking. Four of the year's top ten videos dealt with critical thinking, including *Why We Believe Conspiracy Theories*, *Misinformation about the Coronavirus*, and *Four Reasons Why Your Conspiracy Theory is False*.

A Growing Treasure Chest of Online Knowledge

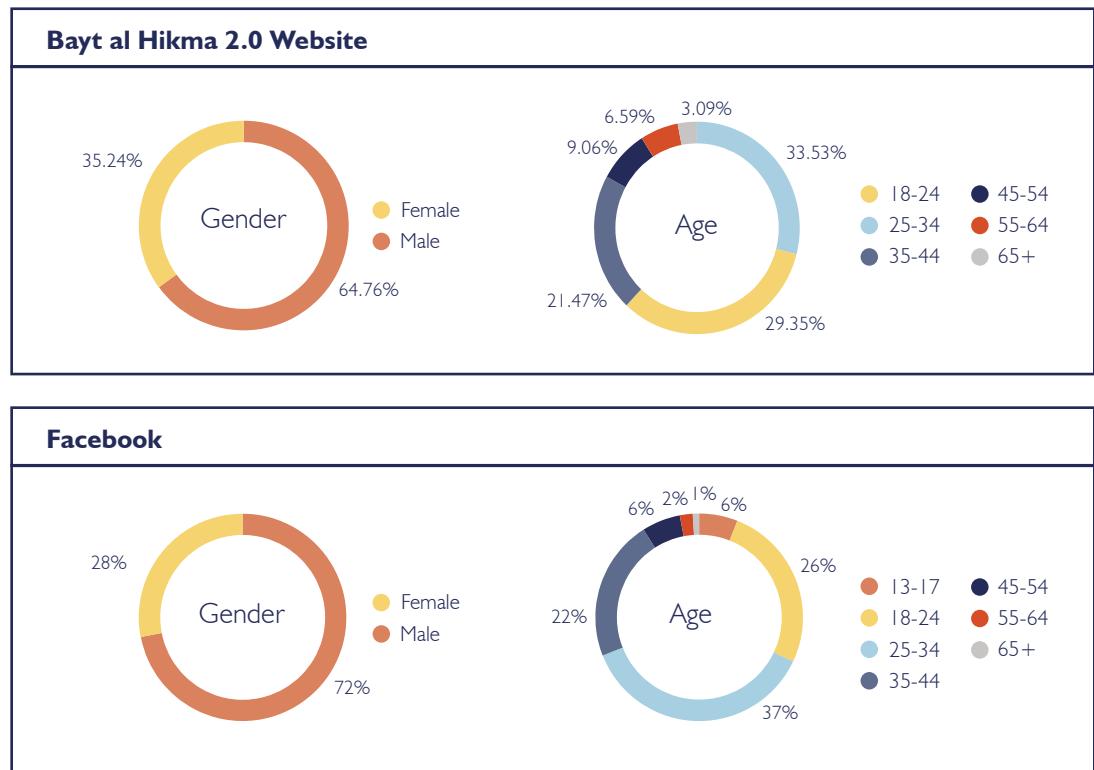
19,564 books, videos,
articles, podcasts
in 2 years

67% growth
in 2020

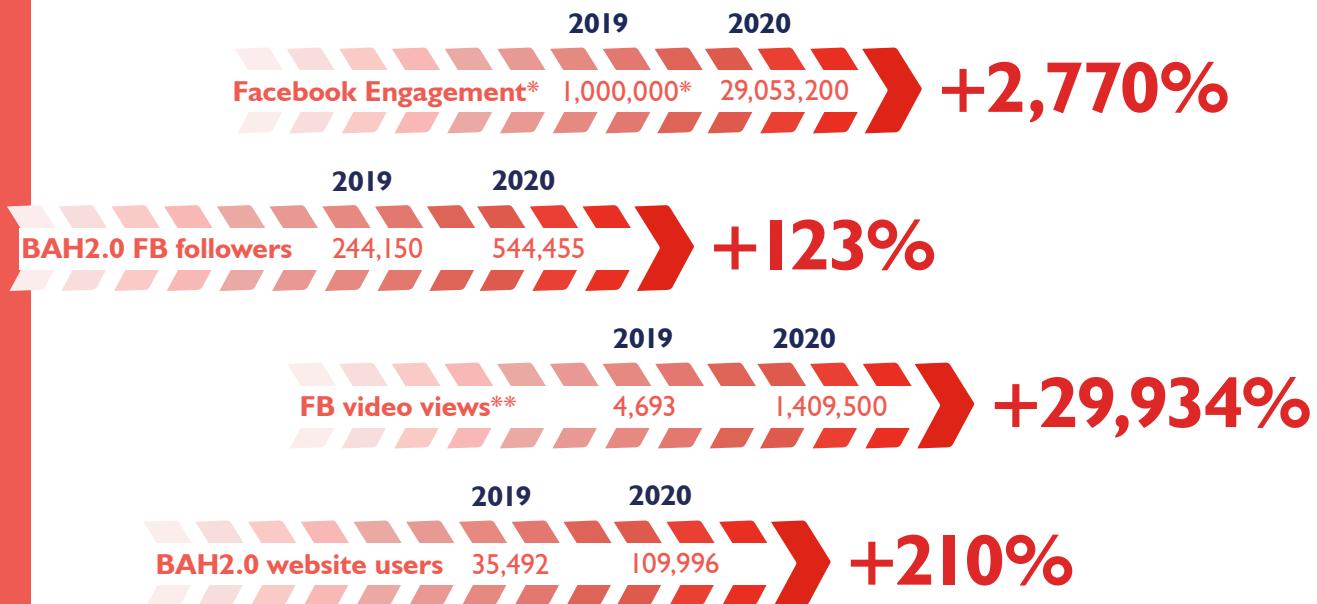
IBB's 4.8 Million Followers in MENA



IBB's Digital Demographics



Millions Engage with House of Wisdom 2.0 Content



*Engagement results include both Facebook's total 3 second or more views of IBB video and infographic content and FB engagement data (likes, shares, and more). Data for 2019 are incomplete; this is an estimate based on Facebook data.

** Facebook total video views of 1 minute or more.

IBB Wikipedia Translation Project Translates to a Massive Surge in Use



**views increased
+41,162%**

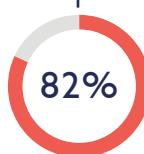
Until IBB's MENA translation team got involved, Wikipedia Arabic lagged well behind other languages.

2020 saw dramatic proof of why it all matters: Views of the 19,204 Wikipedia articles translated by IBB surged an incredible 4,162%.

	2019	2020	Growth
Article Views*	1,000,000*	42,618,607	4,162%
Wikipedia Arabic**	19th	10th	

MENA Youth Like What They See from BAH2.0

82% say BAH2.0 is useful or very useful to society



88% say BAH2.0 is important or very important to translate information from different languages into Arabic or Kurdish



* Article counts based on Wikipedia data. The 2019 estimate does not include counts of article views prior to the IBB intervention. In the latter case, Arabic versions of these articles were incomplete "stubs," i.e., Wikipedia terminology indicating an incomplete article.

** Source: Wikipedia's rankings of the amount of content available in each language.

IBB's Everyday Heroes, Making the Inaccessible Accessible

IBB is led by a Middle Eastern team of more than 60 young women and men who work virtually from more than a dozen countries, serving

as translators, editors, video and infographic producers, and social media experts. Below IBB translators receive workshop certificate.



“They are to a person liberal and open-minded. Many suffered from discrimination and death threats, or lived in war zones. 50% are young women (22 to 25 years old); we also have people who identify as LGBT. There are Christians, Muslims from different sects, atheists, and agnostics. They are incredibly accomplished. Many have advanced degrees in the humanities, engineering, medicine, and more.”

Ahmed Al Rayyis
BAH 2.0 Program Manager

IBB Translators Explain Why BAH 2.0 Matters

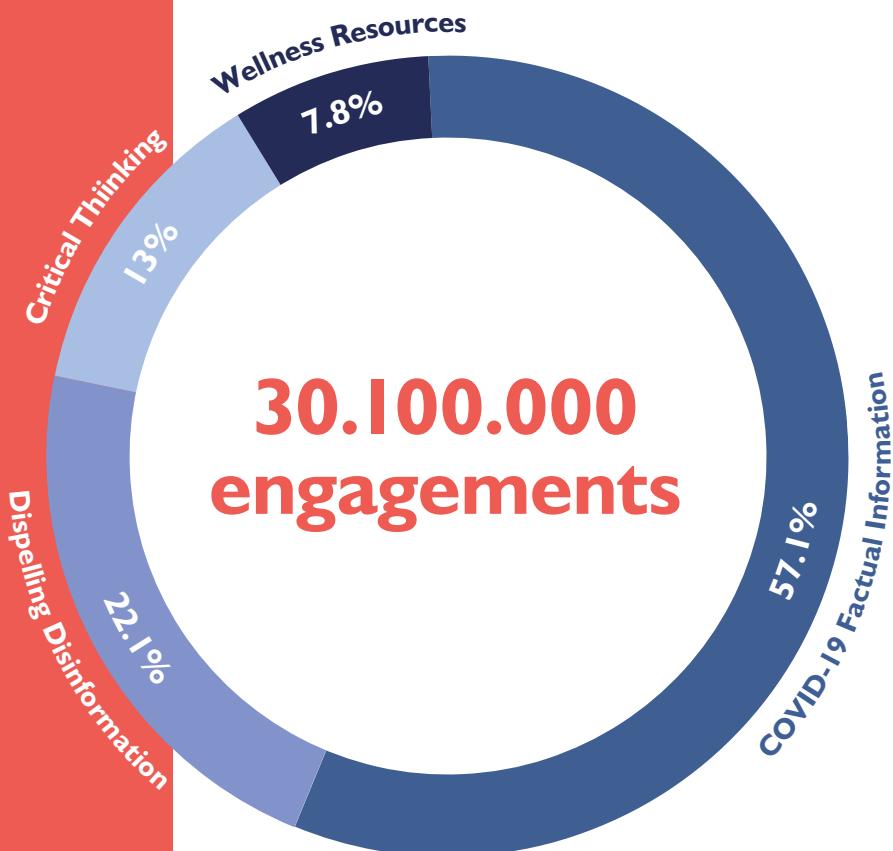
“Can you imagine the future of young learners exposed to Arabic articles in the hard sciences, philosophy, economics, psychology, literature, and feminism? This is what keeps ME going forward as a human being / woman / translator living in a dark part of the world.”

Mera Jundi
BAH 2.0 Translator



Countering Disinformation in the Age of COVID-19

IBB's *Stop the Spread* Campaign Engages 30 Million



Videos > 22.900.000 views

TOP VIDEOS

- #1 Conspiracy Theories About COVID-19 (satirical critique)
2019-2020
3,400,000 VIEWS
- #2 Interview With COVID-19 Patient
3,400,000 VIEWS
- #3 Why Do I Need to Cover My Face when I leave the House?
1,000,000 VIEWS

Infographics > 3.400.000 views

TOP INFOGRAPHICS

- #1 5 Myths and Facts About COVID-19 2019-2020
206,215 VIEWS
- #2 Myths About COVID-19
175,476 VIEWS
- #3 Myths and Facts Pt. 2 About COVID-19
173,949 VIEWS

Articles > 1.900.000 views

TOP WIKIPEDIA ARTICLES

- #1 Coronavirus Pandemic 2019-2020
969,000 VIEWS
- #2 Coronavirus Disease
311,714 VIEWS
- #3 Coronavirus associated with severe acute respiratory syndrome type 2
145,341 VIEWS

IBB launched its *Stop the Spread* public education campaign in March 2020 with the urgent goals of upending the flood of COVID-19 disinformation propagated by regional regimes, China and Russia, and educating Arab youth about the steps they could take to protect their health and combat the pandemic.

The campaign also attracted more than 50 news stories in international media.



The Humanitarian Effort

“We couldn’t just educate people about masks; we had to provide them.”

Dr. Khalid Al Joubry
Humanitarian Project
Director



IBB's COVID-19 humanitarian relief effort targeted the most war-torn, vulnerable communities in Iraq, ultimately providing accurate health information, 144,500 masks and 756,000 meals in Mosul, Baghdad, and the provinces of Wasit, Babylon, and Anbar.

ITEM	TARGET	RESULT
Masks	50M	144.5M
Meals	115M	756M

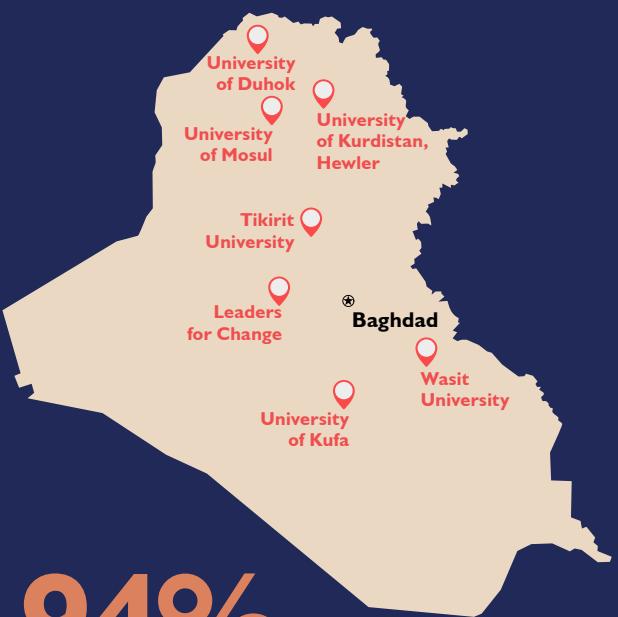
Bel Arabi, the New Source for Arab Liberal Views in MENA



Bel Arabi is the new, rapidly growing home for Arab liberal thinkers and advocates. Thanks to our partnership with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Bel Arabi's podcasts and videos provide a much-needed platform for Arab liberalism 2020 topics included:

- Women and Public Office
- Life Under ISIS Rule
- How Does Business Contribute to Improving Human Rights Conditions?

University Student Translator Program, Overcoming Barriers



94%

are likely to recommend
the program to their peers

The University Student Translator program develops the translation, professional and leadership skills of university students. 81 students participated in 2020, successfully translating 1,400 Wikipedia articles on such topics as science, human and civil rights, and more.

“I realized that knowledge is without doubt the most influential weapon against evil. By translating knowledge into Arabic, I want to prove that we can make the world a better place.

Momen Mohamad

University of Mosul student, and participant in IBB's Iraq University Translator Program

Strategic Partners



The ISC Project



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Professor of Evolutionary
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Founder & President,
Ideas Beyond Borders

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Laith Al-Shawaf

Professor of Evolution Psychology
and Content Advisor

Omar Mohammed

Historian and Author of the
Mosul Eye



Friends of Ideas Beyond Borders

Ideas Beyond Borders launched the Friends of Ideas Beyond Borders, our new annual giving society, this year. Without the FIBB, our mission would not be possible. In this Annual Report,

we recognize the especially generous donors who supported IBB during the past fiscal year, which began January 1, 2020, and ended December 31, 2020.

President's Council (\$10,000+)

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Bright Horizon Fund
DonorsTrust

The Conru Foundation
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Rosenthal Family Fund
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Critical Thinker's Circle (\$1,000+)

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The Saramar Trust

Our Generous In-Kind Supporters

TunnelBear
The ISC Project

White and Case LLP
The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom

IBB regrets any errors or omissions



Financials

Consolidated Statement of Activities*

Year Ending December 31, 2020

OPERATING REVENUES

Contributions	1,608,544
Misc. Income	72

TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE **\$1,608,616**

OPERATING EXPENSES

Program Services	1,054,413
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SUPPORTING SERVICES

Management and General	30,532
Fundraising	138,135
TOTAL SUPPORTING SERVICES	168,667

TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES **\$1,223,080**

ASSETS

Current Assets	1,246,606
Fixed Assets	2,955
TOTAL ASSETS	1,249,561

LIABILITIES AND EQUITY

Liabilities	145,885
TOTAL LIABILITIES	145,885
Retained Earnings	1,293,362
Net Income	251,085
TOTAL EQUITY	1,395,447

TOTAL ASSETS AND LIABILITIES **\$1,249,562**

* This information is reported from IBB's unaudited financial statements. IBB's audit is underway. Audited financial results will be made available in place of the current statement.



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