

2024

Annual Report



**In places where
learning is forbidden
and ideas are feared,
people keep pushing
forward.**

Ideas Beyond Borders stands with them, supporting underground teachers, independent thinkers, and local entrepreneurs who are building freer, more informed societies from the ground up.



Dear Supporters and Friends,

2024 was a year when the ground shifted beneath people's feet, yet they stood taller. Across Afghanistan and the Middle East, the individuals we work with kept creating meaning in places designed to suppress it.

Underground teachers kept classrooms alive behind blackout curtains.

Translators carried compelling and important ideas about freedom across languages. Entrepreneurs opened shops and studios even as power cuts, checkpoints, and collapsing economies made daily life feel heavier.

And still, people continued, not because conditions improved, but because stopping would have meant surrendering the future.

In Afghanistan, forty underground schools taught nearly four thousand girls in ten provinces. In living rooms and basements, teachers who had lost their public school jobs rebuilt classrooms with donated books and laptops paid through digital wallets and Bitcoin. When the world looked away, they kept going.

Our House of Wisdom 2.0 team translated almost two million words into Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi/Dari, and Pashto, launched a new bilingual website, and reached more than one hundred million readers and viewers. Some of our translators wrote essays about what translation means to them, not as a job but as a form of intellectual

courage, and a way to expand what their societies believe is possible.

The Innovation Hub funded eighty-three entrepreneurs who turned modest grants into nearly one million dollars in revenue. From a women-led media start-up in Herat to an olive-waste clean energy project in Beirut to design studios and bookstores in Baghdad and Erbil, the region's often overlooked revolutionaries showed how dignity is contagious when people have the tools to sow it.

This year, their courage was recognized. An Afghan teacher operating a network of secret classrooms received the Axel Springer Foundation Award for Courage. I was honored to speak about her work, and the work of so many like her, at the German Parliament, at TEDNext in Atlanta, at the Oslo Freedom Forum, and at the Copenhagen Democracy Summit.

2024 was a milestone year for Ideas Beyond Borders. We are becoming a trusted and sought-after organization for those who want credible, practical, locally rooted solutions in the Middle East and in the West. Policymakers, donors, and institutions now look to



IBB not only to understand what is happening on the ground—but to understand what works in practice. What was once aspirational for IBB is now all the more possible.

In the year ahead, expect to see more of us. We will be present in parliaments and conferences, in universities and community centers, and in private roundtables and public debates. Our presence is growing because the demand for real, tested solutions is increasing.

Through it all, our guiding north star remains unchanged: to keep knowledge alive, expand economic opportunity, and empower people to build freer, more informed societies from the ground up.

To everyone who has stood with us—our partners, sponsors, and friends, thank you. You have helped keep classrooms open, books translated, businesses growing, and hope alive in places determined to extinguish it.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Faisal'.

Faisal Saeed Al Mutar
President and Founder
Ideas Beyond Borders

01

House of Wisdom 2.0: Expanding Access to Knowledge

IBB's Bayt al-Hikma 2.0 (House of Wisdom 2.0) continued to grow as the largest Arabic-language knowledge platform of its kind.

It translated and produced content that brought critical thinking, science, and history to millions of readers and viewers — in Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi/Dari, and Pashto.

100,825,646

views across
platforms

1,904,931

words translated into Arabic,
Pashto, Farsi/Dari and Kurdish

2,324

original pieces of content
produced by IBB



Partnerships and Reach



IBB partnered with the American University of Kurdistan (AUK) to launch the first Wikipedia Club in Iraq that publishes articles in Kurdish and English.

The club began with a group of students from different majors who translated and wrote articles on Kurdish culture, literature, and history, guided by IBB training materials and mentors from Bayt al-Hikma 2.0. Within its first semester, members had already published dozens of new articles, helping expand Kurdish-language content and digital literacy on campus.

“This is an exciting opportunity for our students and we are glad to be partnering with IBB to make this initiative a reality and a success.”

Tom Hayes

Chair of General Education at AUK



AUK students impart translation workshops on campus.

Bayt al-Hikma’s reach now overlaps with IBB’s education and entrepreneurship programs: its translated materials are used by Afghan teachers in underground schools, Objectivist study groups, and Bitcoin literacy initiatives alike — proof that knowledge travels farthest when it’s shared freely.

Voices Behind the Words: Our Translators' Stories

Translation sits at the center of Ideas Beyond Borders's work.

Every article, book, and video starts with a deliberate choice to carry an idea across a language barrier—sometimes in places where that choice can put people at risk. In 2024, several IBB translators wrote about their experiences for the House of Wisdom 2.0 blog. Their essays show how translation can change what people know, what they question, and what conversations become possible.



From Isolation to Enlightenment

Alissar Obaid

Growing up in a conservative community in Syria, [Alissar Obaid described](#) how IBB opened new doors for her and her readers.

“We lived surrounded by invisible walls. We were cut off from other ways of thinking, and even from curiosity itself. Knowing too much could make you question the customs and traditions that everyone around you accepted without thought.”

Through translation, Alissar challenged those walls, first by sharing science and history, then by encouraging dialogue.

Her work changed more than just her own outlook: even her mother and friends began rethinking long-held assumptions about women's rights and LGBT issues.



Smuggled Wisdom

Habib Zreik

Habib Zreik's story begins in his father's hidden library, where banned books like *The Iliad*, *The Bible*, and *The Ginza Rabba* were smuggled between Saudi Arabia and Syria. Reading them became his first act of rebellion.

“When I was in elementary school, a friend once reported me to the teacher for mentioning a banned religious sect. From that day, I learned that some ideas are dangerous to even talk about. I began to dream of living somewhere I could read and debate freely.”

Today, Habib translates some of the same ideas he once had to hide. His work with IBB has brought Arabic editions of *Freedom of Speech* by Jacob Mchangama, *Palestine 1936* by Oren Kessler, and *Foundational Falsehoods of Creationism* by Aron Ra to thousands of readers.



Rami Abdo Zarad studied English literature at Damascus University and joined Bayt al-Hikma 2.0 to close the gap between those who have access to information and those who do not. “Any seeker of unfiltered information has always needed two things: English proficiency and internet access,” he wrote in his article [Words in Motion](#). “Through translation, we can remove both barriers.” For him, every new article starts a chain reaction, each reader inspiring another to learn.



In *Literary Liberation*, **Hazem Mousa** traces the decline of serious translation in the Arabic world and the flood of sensational or politicized works that replaced it. Joining IBB reminded him of the original House of Wisdom's purpose—to make knowledge public. *“For the first time, I felt I was witnessing a genuine attempt at an Arabic renaissance in the making,”* he wrote, describing the team's efforts to bring modern philosophy and science into Arabic and Kurdish.

Books Translated or Re-Edited in 2024



Palestine 1936
by Oren Kessler



Rationality
by Steven Pinker



**Ludwig von Mises:
A Primer**
by Eamonn Butler



**Ayn Rand:
An Introduction**
by Eamonn Butler



**An Introduction
to Taxation**
by Eamonn Butler



**The Morality of
Capitalism**
by Tom G. Palmer



**The Little
Bitcoin Book**
by Bitcoin Collective



**That Joke Isn't
Funny Anymore:
On the Death and
Rebirth of Comedy**
by Lou Perez



**Classical Liberalism:
A Primer**
by Eamonn Butler



Enlightenment Now
by Steven Pinker

A New Digital Home for House of Wisdom 2.0

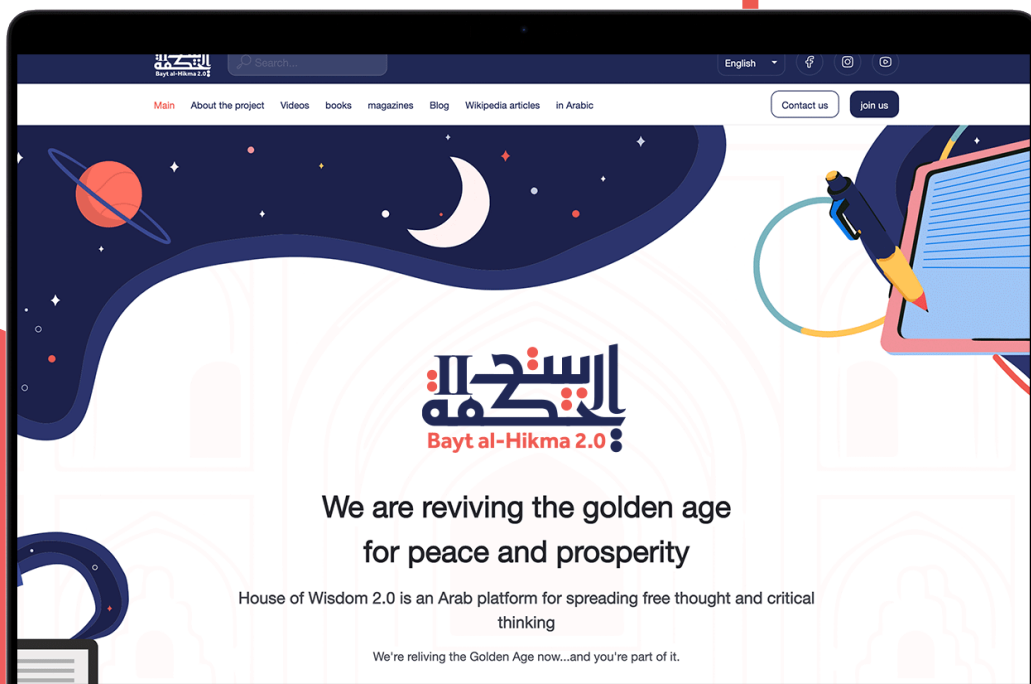
This year, our flagship initiative entered a new era with the launch of its new website—a living, multimedia knowledge hub designed to bring learning, translation, and open inquiry to millions across the Arabic-speaking world.

Inspired by Baghdad's original House of Wisdom, the platform continues the legacy of a historic center of learning by offering diverse formats of high-quality, accessible knowledge.

The new site brings this mission to life through an expanded digital library, videos, articles, podcasts, and translated works—all now available in Arabic and AI-translated English. More intuitive, more dynamic, and more comprehensive than ever, the platform embodies our commitment to reviving a spirit of curiosity, innovation, and exchange—reimagined for the digital era.

“Thank you for enriching Arabic content with this book. Excellent translation, and I look forward to more books like this one.”

Ali Saad,
who accessed
a free copy of
Steven Pinker's
Enlightenment Now
through the new
website



02

Underground Schools in Afghanistan

When the Taliban banned girls from secondary education, many teachers went underground. IBB helped them continue teaching.

In 2024, IBB supported 40 covert classrooms across 10 provinces of Afghanistan, teaching **3,750 students** in subjects ranging from math and English to physics, biology, and tailoring. These lessons took place in living rooms, basements, and backyards — anywhere a curtain could serve as a wall.

✓ **3,750 students** and **40 teachers** employed, most of them women who had lost their public-school jobs.

✓ **13 core subjects** taught, including literacy, art, and health awareness.

✓ IBB provided **books, laptops, and teaching stipends** — often delivered through digital wallets or Bitcoin transfers to ensure security.



Women are training in 200+ tailoring shops opened by our graduates. It's a way for them to earn money without drawing too much attention.

Many of these teachers now also mentor students who have since opened their own small schools. IBB has added weekly reading circles, health sessions, and counseling to help girls cope with trauma and prepare for online higher education.

The Underground Schools program was also selected by **The Citizenry** as its annual Black Friday Fund recipient, contributing \$30,000 to ensure continued access to education for women and girls across Afghanistan. This support will allow IBB to expand psychological counseling, health education, and literacy programs within the schools in 2025.



Teaching Afghan girls English is vital because it gives them access to global knowledge and opportunities for remote employment in the future.

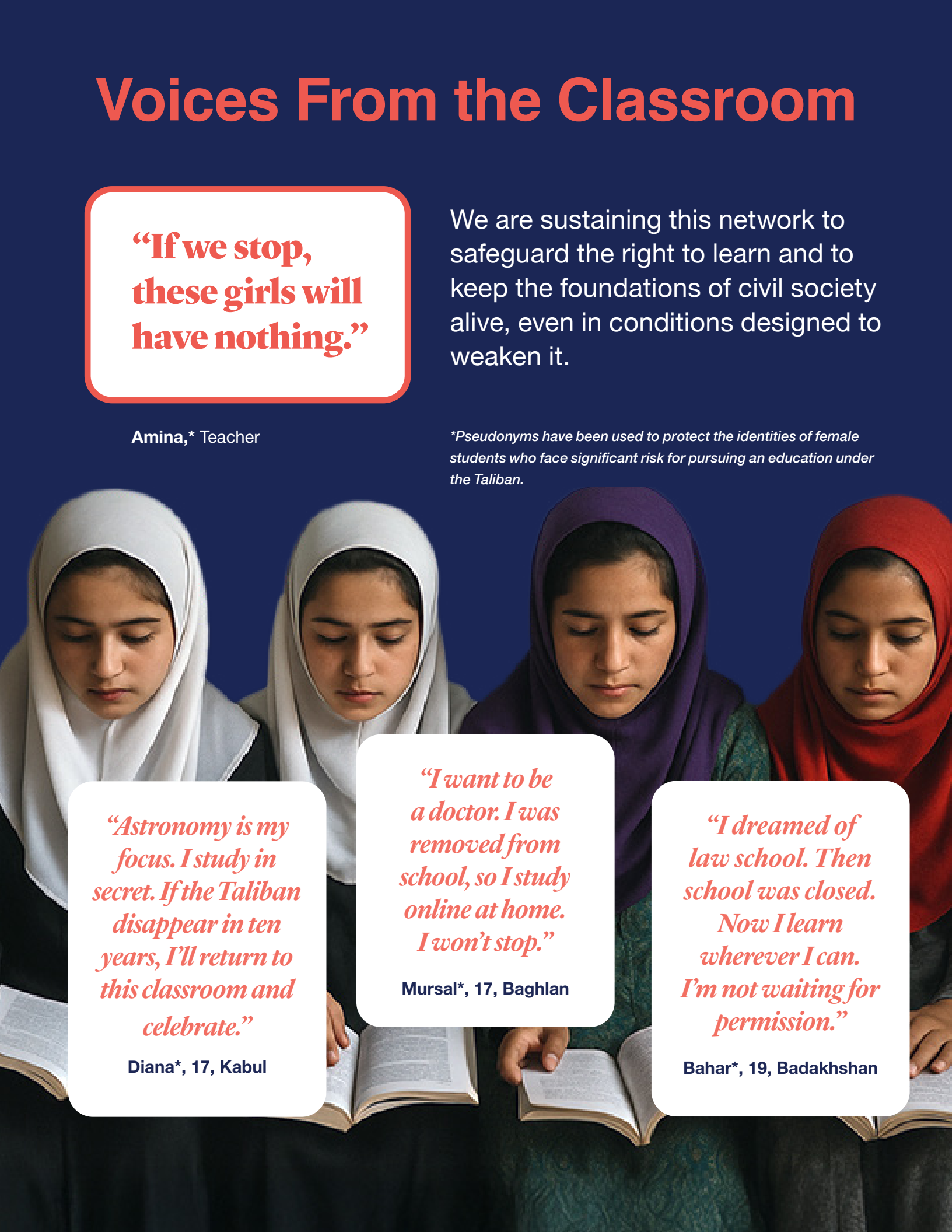
Voices From the Classroom

**“If we stop,
these girls will
have nothing.”**

Amina,* Teacher

We are sustaining this network to safeguard the right to learn and to keep the foundations of civil society alive, even in conditions designed to weaken it.

**Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of female students who face significant risk for pursuing an education under the Taliban.*



“Astronomy is my focus. I study in secret. If the Taliban disappear in ten years, I’ll return to this classroom and celebrate.”

Diana*, 17, Kabul

“I want to be a doctor. I was removed from school, so I study online at home. I won’t stop.”

Mursal*, 17, Baghlan

“I dreamed of law school. Then school was closed. Now I learn wherever I can. I’m not waiting for permission.”

Bahar*, 19, Badakhshan

03

Innovation Hub: When Ideas Become Practical Solutions

The Innovation Hub is the point where House of Wisdom 2.0's ideas leave the page and land in workshops, kitchens, farms, and classrooms.

Instead of staying theoretical, they become small, workable projects—run by people who know their communities best. Through modest, targeted grants, the program helps individuals turn their own ideas into businesses that support families, create jobs, and strengthen local life.

Across Afghanistan, Iraq, Kurdistan, and Lebanon, the Innovation Hub's 2024 grantees turned small injections of support into real livelihoods. The projects range from bookshops and kitchens to farms, workshops, and classrooms—each one a local expression of knowledge put to work.



The Lotus Flower's Women's Business Incubation program empowers home-based female entrepreneurs in Essyan Camp.

“Without IBB my idea would have remained just that—an idea. With your support, I was able to transform it into a thriving business.”

Mowloda Mowlanzada
Innovation Hub grantee



Afghan innovator Yasir Osmani is refining his smart wheelchair for the mass market

Snapshots From the Innovation Hub

Afghanistan:

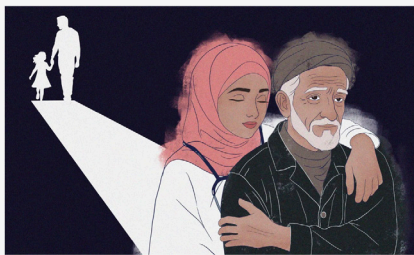
Ideas Put to Work Under Taliban Rule

To Build a Kitchen

A fund from Ideas Beyond Borders is helping one young woman create a future for her family while living under Taliban rule

IDEAS BEYOND BORDERS
JUL 18, 2024

1 Share



[Read the full story](#)

In Kabul, **Zahra**, a 22-year-old doctor, found herself the sole provider for her family after her brother fled the country. **A \$3,500 grant helped her and her father launch a small catering business, one of the few sectors women can still navigate.** Zahra now manages operations, hires staff, and uses her network of patients to bring in clients, proof that even under the Taliban, women can drive family income.

“The fund came at a critical moment when we had no other support.”

Azita Nazhand

Afghan journalist and host of **Rasa Zan TV**

In Herat, **Azita Nazhand, 25**, refused to let Afghanistan’s last women-run TV station go dark. With a \$4,000 grant, she re-launched her channel as **Rasa Zan** (“Woman” in Persian), airing programs that spotlight women’s education and civic life.

Also in Herat, 17-year-old **Osmani** built a **mind-controlled wheelchair** that later won Best Idea at Teknofest Istanbul after IBB’s \$2,000 seed grant.

“It was a big achievement for me,” he said. “The grant turned an idea into reality.”

Nineteen-year-old **Shahin Soliman Khil** used a \$3,000 grant to open **Café Book Timeout**, where young Afghans meet to discuss philosophy and poetry.

Behind the Veil

How Rasa Zan TV gives Afghan women a voice under Taliban pressure

IDEAS BEYOND BORDERS
NOV 08, 2024

4 3

Share



Illustration By Lana Al Jaf

[Read the full story](#)

Kurdistan and Iraq: Local Knowledge Driving New Solutions

In Baghdad, Mohammed Abdulimam transformed personal tragedy into a mission for social change after losing his best friend in a bombing. He launched **Taatuf**, a t-shirt line featuring messages like “Words are windows, not walls.” With a \$3,000 grant, he doubled production and led youth campaigns championing empathy and coexistence.

“I realized that violence would not bring my friend back and that the best way to avenge him is to help create a society that is less welcoming to these acts.”

Mohammed Abdulimam Mohammed
Owner of Taatuf

Words Over Weapons

Iraqi fashion brand spreads messages of peace and compassion as an antidote to violence

IDEAS BEYOND BORDERS
FEB 04, 2025

2 1

Share



"Words are windows, not walls"

[Read the full story](#)



Ideas Beyond Borders • November 22, 2024

Forgotten Women Defying the Odds

As funding falls, The Lotus Flower is finding ways to offer sustainable support for displaced women across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Humanitarian Aid Innovation Hub Iraq News Women

[Read the full story](#)

In Erbil, **The Lotus Flower** is empowering women inside the region's largest refugee camps. A \$5,000 Innovation Hub grant helped launch the Women's Business Incubation Program, offering financial support to home-based female entrepreneurs in the Essyan Camp. One participant, **Amina Khalaf Hamed**, a 28-year-old seamstress from Sharya, had sold her sewing tools to fund her mother's cancer treatment and struggled to support her family. With assistance from the program, she repurchased her equipment, revived her business, and now plans to mentor and employ young women in her community. According to regional director **Vian Ahmed**, the initiative not only fuels economic independence but also strengthens family well-being, even helping reduce domestic violence by boosting women's financial stability.

In Sulaymaniyah, **Liza Al-Bag** is preserving heritage through innovation. Her work revives ancient Kurdish Deq tattoo motifs by weaving them into contemporary rugs. A \$3,000 grant funded new wool-processing tools and training opportunities for rural women.

Lebanon: Practical Innovation in a Time of Strain

In Beirut, Lana Halabi used a \$4,000 IBB grant to bring her grandfather's old Halabi Bookshop back to life. The shop first opened in 1958, then sat locked for years. She cleared out the dust, added new shelving in the back, and built a small online store so she could ship books to readers abroad. "We get messages from the diaspora saying how proud they feel," she said. What began as an effort to save a family space has turned into a small literary hangout for the community.

Reviving a Legacy: The Renaissance of Halabi Bookshop

A combination of business acumen and stubborn determination drove Lana Halabi to salvage a shuttered family bookshop and transform it into a cultural institution

IDEAS BEYOND BORDERS
APR 08, 2024

5 1 3

Share ...



Abdullah and Lana Halabi

[Read the full story](#)

Olive farming in times of war

Amid rising tensions, Samer Hasbany is forced to find new ways to maintain his family olive business in southern Lebanon

IDEAS BEYOND BORDERS
SEP 26, 2024

4 1

Share ...



[Read the full story](#)

South of the city, Samer Hasbany was watching his family's olive farm struggle. Conflict made everything harder, and piles of wasted olive pulp kept building up after each harvest.

With a \$2,000 grant, he started **Olive Log** — a workshop where he presses that pulp into fuel briquettes. Local restaurants now buy them for their stoves, and a few neighbors earn seasonal income helping with production. It's a practical idea that cut down on waste and kept the farm afloat.

In Tripoli, IBB backed Gudtoli, a fresh-pasta shop run by Leila Khalife. Her team switched part of their operation to solar power, hired local women, and began planning live pasta stations for markets and events. **The business has become a reliable employer in a city where jobs come and go.**

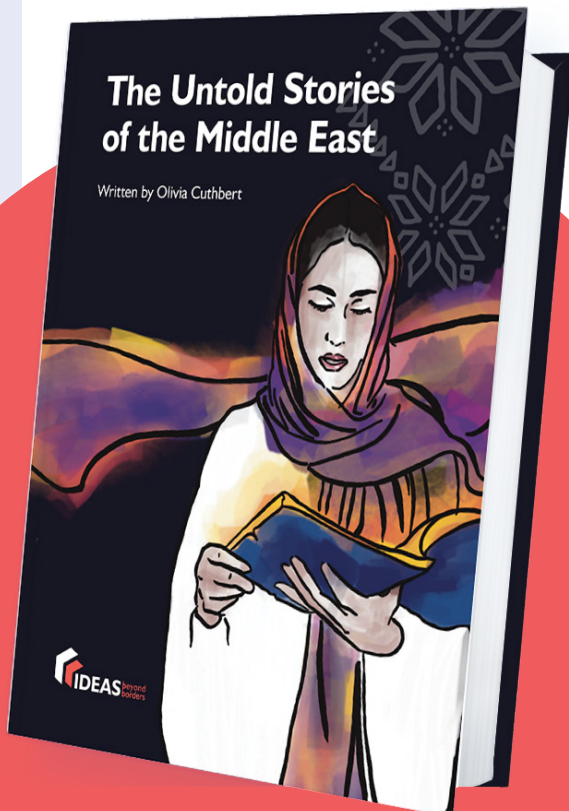
These stories show how the Innovation Hub brings the House of Wisdom 2.0 to life—ideas about freedom and self-direction turning into real fixes in people's hands.

2024 Impact Summary

Region	Grantees	Grants (USD)	Revenue (USD)	Jobs created	Direct Beneficiaries
Afghanistan	33	\$91,600	\$93,709	315	88,865
MENA (Iraq, Kurdistan, Lebanon, others)	50	\$125,355	\$874,025	214	33,579
Total	83	\$216,955	\$967,734	529	122,444

The Untold Stories of the Middle East

In 2024, Ideas Beyond Borders published *The Untold Stories of the Middle East*, a book that brings together firsthand accounts from people building something new in Iraq, Kurdistan, Lebanon, and Afghanistan.



Reported by our field team and written by Olivia Cuthbert, it follows Innovation Hub grantees whose work rarely makes headlines: women in Kabul learning trades they can practice from home, engineers in Erbil shaping prosthetic limbs on a 3D printer, young people in Karbala carving out space for free expression, and Yazidi families in Sinjar piecing their cultural life back together.

The book pairs these accounts with field photographs, original illustrations, and careful visual design that make each place and project feel close at hand. Together, they show how people in the region push forward

The Untold Stories of the Middle East is [available on Amazon](#), and all proceeds go directly back into supporting this work.

04

Bel Arabi: Free Thought in Arabic Media

Through Bel Arabi, IBB brought evidence-based storytelling to Arabic-speaking audiences. The team produced videos and podcasts on history, religion, and politics, subjects often avoided or simplified elsewhere.



2024 Reach

✓ 11 videos with 22.4 million total views.

✓ 5 podcast episodes with 6.1 million views.

28,000,000

combined engagements across social media



BEL ARABI
بـعـرـبـي



Featured Videos

Hezbollah: Who Pays the Cost of Escalation?

This documentary traced Hezbollah's origins, Iran's influence, and Lebanon's political cost.



The Crisis of Accusing Taha Hussein of Apostasy

Another episode revisited Egypt's blind scholar Taha Hussein, who was tried for blasphemy in 1926 after questioning historical sources in literature.

05

Objectivist Center of Iraq: Rational Thought and Enterprise

Funded by the Prometheus Foundation and hosted by the University of Kurdistan-Hawler (UKH), IBB's pilot for the **Objectivist Center of Iraq** introduced university students to Ayn Rand's philosophy and its link to entrepreneurship.

Participants created micro-projects grounded in Objectivist principles — from leadership training and business innovation to rational debate circles — proving that philosophy can drive real-world action. Many went on to launch debate clubs and campus initiatives inspired by these ideas, turning abstract principles into tangible change. The pilot's success has already raised interest from additional universities to host the program in 2025, marking the start of a movement toward rational and entrepreneurial education.



Workshops helped Iraqi students explore Objectivist ideas, the importance of entrepreneurship and individual liberty.



After the workshops participants showed increased confidence in applying rational thinking and balancing personal and professional goals.

- ✓ **Six workshops** held across eight universities.
- ✓ **21 participants**, representing 9 institutions including **UKH, Mosul University, AUK, Tishk University, and AUIS.**
- ✓ Post-program assessments showed **strong gains in understanding Objectivist philosophy** and self-interest as a moral principle.

**“For the first time,
I saw how philosophy
connects to the
choices I make every
day.”** Student from Erbil



**Faculty partners
described the sessions
as “rare spaces for open
intellectual debate” in
their universities.**



06

Youth Media Program for Minorities in Iraq

Ideas Beyond Borders launched a one-year Youth Media Program to elevate the voices of Iraq's minority communities.

In partnership with the Kurdistan Information Network (KIN) and the Wikimedia Foundation, IBB trained 26 young reporters from 13 minority groups to document their heritage and daily lives through film, raising awareness of minority issues and promoting tolerance.

Participants produced **13 documentaries** and multilingual Wikipedia articles, reaching

more than **13.4 million views** (four times the target). Films covered Yazidi, Shabak, Kaka'i, Fayli, Christian (Assyrians, Armenians), Roma, Zoroastrian, Sabean-Mandean, Baha'i, Jews, Turkmen, and Bidoon communities.

The first English-language episode is set to premiere at a public screening in February 2025 at New York University (NYU).



This initiative set a precedent for inclusive storytelling in Iraq, combining professional journalism training with digital media advocacy.



Broadcast on Zagros TV

Eleven of the program's documentaries were broadcast on **Zagros TV**, one of the Kurdistan Region's largest satellite channels with nationwide reach. The broadcasts gave unprecedented visibility to Iraq's minority communities, bringing their stories to millions of households and validating the work of the young reporters.



Untold Stories:
Yazidi



Untold Stories:
Roma



Untold Stories:
Christians



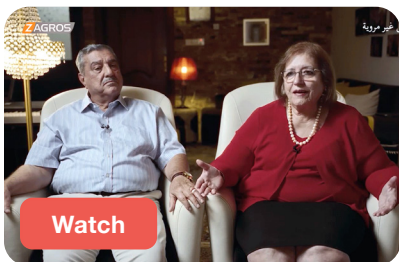
Untold Stories:
Fayli



Untold Stories:
Armenian



Untold Stories:
Sabeen-Mandean



Untold Stories:
Baha'i



Untold Stories:
The Stateless



Untold Stories:
Shabak



Untold Stories:
Turkmen



Untold Stories:
Zoroastrian

07

Kurdistan is Open for Business: A Path to Prosperity for Startups

Funded by Atlas Network's [Smart Bets](#) initiative and implemented with Rwanda Foundation, ECHO, and key Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) ministries, this project makes it faster and easier for young entrepreneurs to register and grow their businesses.



“Finally, someone is looking deeply into our existing system and identifying the gaps and solutions.”

Lana Dizayi, Head of Media and Information at the Kurdistan Regional Government

2024 Achievements

- ✓ Launched a pilot of the region's first fully integrated online business registration portal, aiming to **reduce registration time from three months to just 24 hours**.
- ✓ **Drew 998 startup applications in the first week**, with 30 pilot businesses selected to refine and improve the platform.
- ✓ **Activated early reform dialogue with top government institutions**, including the KRG Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Board of Investment, and leading chambers of commerce.
- ✓ **Implemented a landmark research and advocacy initiative** identifying the legal and administrative barriers hindering business creation.
- ✓ Produced **decisive findings**:
 - **95%** of entrepreneurs cannot access loans.
 - **84%** cite outdated tax laws.
 - **87%** report limited access to training and startup support.



95% of surveyed entrepreneurs lack access to loans and 87% report limited access to training and startup support.

08

Bitcoin and Financial Freedom

“Bitcoin let us keep teaching when all other systems failed.”

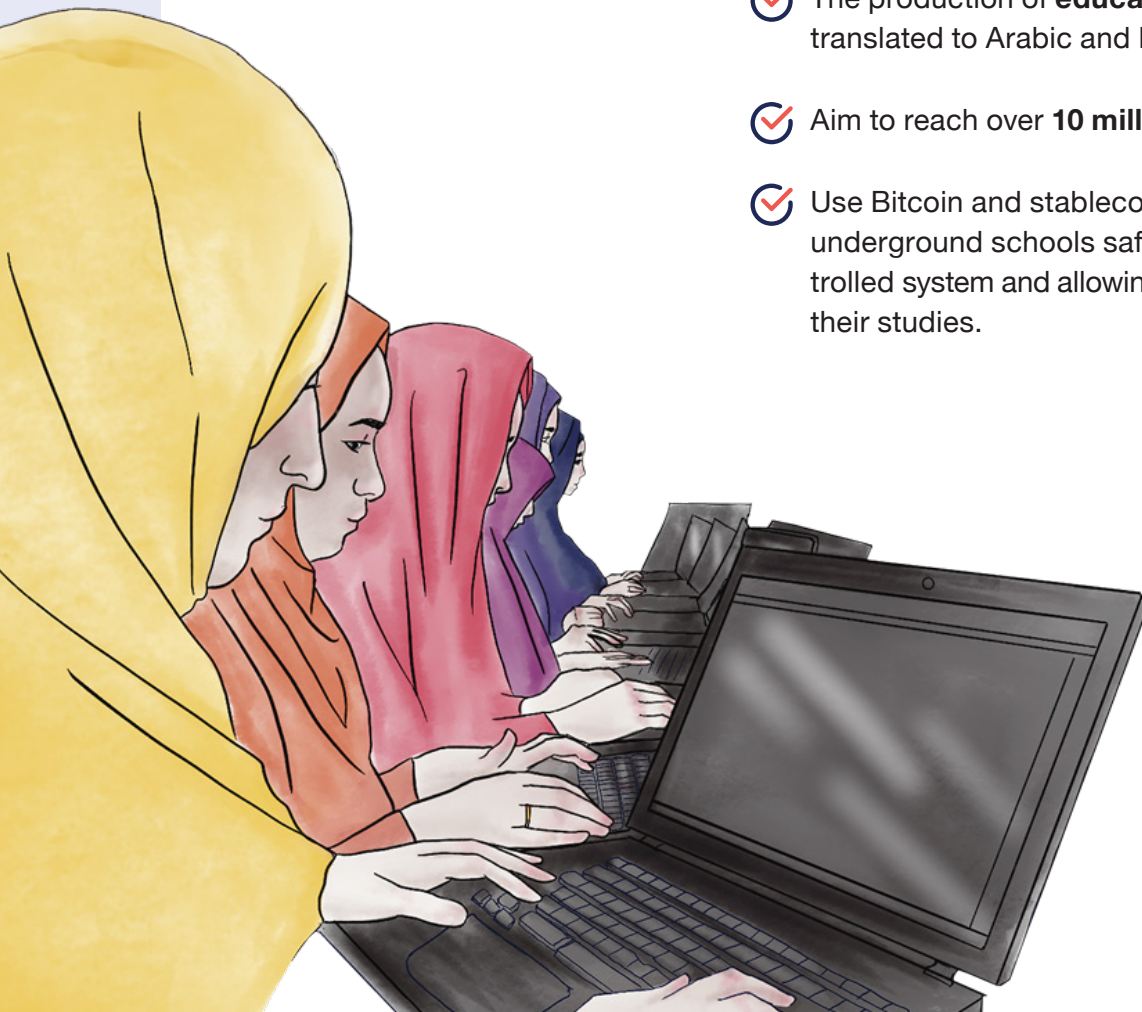
Sara, Afghan educator*

**Name changed for safety*

With support from the Human Rights Foundation, IBB’s Building Bridges to Bitcoin initiative will educate millions on digital finance and personal autonomy.

By providing educational material in Arabic, the project will empower local youth to combat tyranny with Bitcoin, secure their financial autonomy, protect their human rights, and transform their region. Funding will support:

- ✓ The production of **educational videos** and **articles** translated to Arabic and Pashto.
- ✓ Aim to reach over **10 million views** across platforms.
- ✓ Use Bitcoin and stablecoins to pay teachers in underground schools safely, bypassing Taliban-controlled system and allowing **3,750 girls** to continue their studies.



09

Global Engagement

Public Speaking and Thought Leadership



In 2024, Ideas Beyond Borders carried its work far beyond classrooms and studios. IBB's founder, Faisal Saeed Al Mutar, spoke around the world about rebuilding societies from the ground up — from the [Oslo Freedom Forum](#) to [TEDNext](#) in Atlanta, where his talk, "[A Fresh Approach to International Development](#)," drew global attention to IBB's locally-led model.

He also spoke at the Copenhagen Democracy Summit, the Bitcoin MENA Forum, the Global Free Speech Summit at Vanderbilt University, and [addressed students](#) in Guatemala at the College Freedom Forum hosted by Universidad Francisco Marroquín, discussing how entrepreneurship and access to information can create stability in post-conflict regions.

In October 2024, Faisal addressed the **German Parliament** (Bundestag), outlining how local entrepreneurship and access to knowledge can counter extremism. His remarks prompted cross-party interest and ongoing discussions with German policy-makers and foundations.

That same year, Faisal received an Honorary Doctorate from Whittier College, a Fellowship at George Washington University, and the Ellis Island Beacon Award. IBB retained its UN Special Consultative Status and top transparency ratings from Candid (Platinum) and Charity Navigator (4-star).

IBB also launched a [new website](#) to house its programs and impact stories in one place. Within its first months online, the

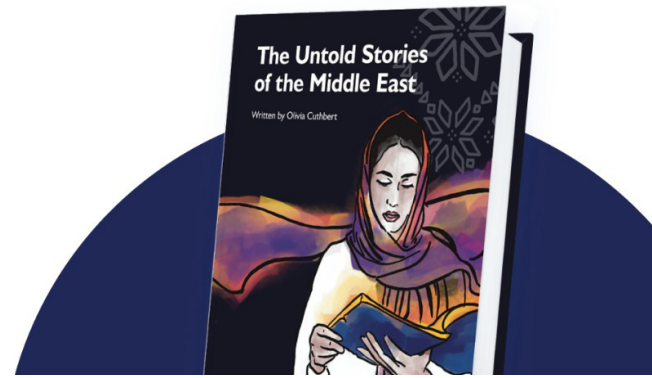
site withstood more than **136,000 malicious attacks** — a sign of both resilience and growing influence in regions where its work challenges authoritarian control over information.

IBB's reach expanded through partnerships with the Human Rights Foundation, Rwanga Foundation, Atlas Network, Prometheus Foundation, and Kurdistan Information Network.

Its programs were featured in Forbes, [Reason Magazine](#), and [FastCompany](#), and its first book, [The Untold Stories of the Middle East](#), captured the voices of teachers, students, and entrepreneurs whose journeys were supported by IBB.

Axel Springer Foundation Award for Courage

In November 2024, an Afghan teacher supported by Ideas Beyond Borders received the Axel Springer Foundation Award for Courage.



She was honored for operating a network of secret classrooms for girls in Afghanistan — part of the IBB-backed underground education system that continues to function despite Taliban restrictions. The teacher accepted the award anonymously for her safety.

The Axel Springer Foundation described her as “a heroine who defies a regime determined to erase women from public life.”

IBB has worked quietly with her and dozens of other Afghan educators since 2021, supplying lesson materials, digital devices, and secure payments that make these schools possible.

The recognition brought global attention to Afghanistan's underground education movement and drew new partners into supporting women-led learning initiatives.

award for courage

Axel Springer Presents the Award for Courage: Anonymous Heroine Operates Underground Schools for Girls in Afghanistan



Financial Summary

Activity and Net Asset Change Summary

Operating Revenue

Contributions of financial assets	\$843,992
Contributions of non-financial assets	-
Investment Income (loss)	\$174,709
Other Income	\$593
Net assets released from restrictions	-

Total Revenue **\$1,019,294**

Operating Expenses

Program Services	\$2,938,857
Management & General	\$450,069
Development	\$356,078

Total Expense **\$3,745,004**

Change in Net Assets **\$2,960,420**

Net Assets

Beginning of year	\$5,428,188
End of year	\$2,702,478

Assets and Liabilities Summary

Assets

Cash	\$2,388,263
Investments	\$498,036
Employee retention credit receivable	-
Prepaid Expenses	\$2,034
Security Deposit	\$4,150

Total Assets **\$2,893,919**

Liabilities and Net Assets

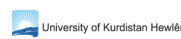
Liabilities	\$146,981
Loans Payable	\$146,981
Net Assets	\$2,702,478
Without Donor Restrictions	\$1,848,723
With Donor Restrictions	\$853,755

Total Liabilities and Net Assets **\$2,894,919**

This summary is based on the audited financial statement prepared by Ideas Beyond Borders auditor Withum.



Partners and Supporters



Row 1 (left to right): Human Rights Foundation, Wikimedia Foundation, MobileCoin, Atlas Network, Reason Magazine.

Row 2 (left to right): World Liberty Congress, Prometheus Foundation, Institute of Economic Affairs, Skeptic, Paystand.

Row 3 (left to right): Digital Citizens Fund, Google, Afghanistan Economic & Legal Studies Organization, Progress Network, Alliance for Peacebuilding.

Row 4 (left to right): Automatic, ECHO, Wikimedia Levant, University of Kurdistan-Hewler, I Believe in Science.

Row 5 (left to right): Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Rwanga, Wikimedia Farsi, Egyptian Researchers, Jigsaw.



Board of Directors

Samuel Hershey

Chairman of the Board
Partner, White & Case, LLP

Nick Gillespie

Editor at Large,
Reason Magazine

Steven Pinker

Professor of Evolutionary
Psychology Harvard
University

Melissa Chen

Managing Director,
Ideas Beyond Borders

Brady Forrest

Business Development
MobileCoin

Daniel Johnson

CEO & Chairman of
American Financial Systems

Faisal Saeed Al Mutar

Founder & President,
Ideas Beyond Borders

Advisory Board

Anthony Amore

Author and Security
Investigations Expert

Omar Mohammed

Historian and Author of the
Mosul Eye

Sam Vaghar

Executive Director, Millennium
Campus Network

Alberto Fernandez

Vice President, MEMRI,
and former Ambassador

Merete Riisager

Former Danish Minister
of Education

Jeffrey Flier

Former Dean of
Harvard Medical School

Tom G. Palmer

Executive Vice President for
International Programs at Atlas
Network

Aaron Louis

Director of Audio Visual at the
New York Museum of Modern
Art (MoMA)

Cynthia Schneider

Georgetown University,
former US Ambassador to
the Netherlands

Vinicius Fortuna

Censorship and Digital
Security Expert, Jigsaw

Laith Al-Shawaf

Professor of Evolution
Psychology and Content Advisor

Robert Pearson

CEO, The Bliss Group

Hugo Williams

Templar Advisors

Natalie Khazaal

Georgia Institute of Technology

Alex Gladstein

Chief Strategy Officer,
Human Rights Foundation

Michael Trollan

Director of Experience
Technology at Sapient
Razorfish



Individual Partners and Friends

We thank the following for their generous contributions of time, intellect, and service in advancing IBB's program and network.

Ahmed Ahmadian

Vian Ahmed

Mustafa Akyol

Rashad Ali

Masih Alinejad

Jamal Al Ateeq

Basma Alawee

Jeremy Barker

Adam Bartha

Mariana Bernardez

Peter Boghossian

Céline Boustani

Olivia Cuthbert

Debbie Gibbs

Alex Gladstein

Issam Fawaz

Vinicius Fortuna

Khaldoon Al Ghanimi

Yasmin Green

Alexander Hitchens

Neville Hobson

Tiffany Hu

Hussein Abdul Hussein

Mohamed Hajawi

Abdulaziz Al Hamza

Thor Halvorssen

Nouh Al Harmoozi

Honar Issa

Ameen Al Jaleeli

Jorge Jraissati

Andreas Jurgens

Zainab Khan

Zikry Kholil

Jeremy Levy

Brad Lips

Leopoldo Lopez

Elaha Mahboob

Roya Mahboob

Osama Al Maqdoon

Jacob Mchangama

Omar Mohamad

Zainab Mohamadi

Matt Mullenweg

Jennifer Murtazashvili

Gissou Nia

Tom Palmer

Clyde Rathbone

Kareem Al Saqa

Wameeth Al Shibi

Dave Rubin

Rikki Schlott

Nicole Bibbins

Sedaca

Sarah Rose Siskind

Mary Shaw

Christina Hoff

Sommers

Mariya Soroka

Brian Stewart

John Stossel

Jonathan Teo

Colby Thomson

Jhanisse Vaca-Daza

Zach Van Meter

Wolf von Laer

Lorenzo Vidino

Ken Wagner

Rob Walters

Jim Warnock

Nasser Wedaddy

Bari Weiss

Hugo Williams

Gayle Karen Young



Friends of Ideas Beyond Borders

In this annual report, we recognize the members of the Friends of Ideas Beyond Borders, our annual giving society, for their exceptionally generous support. Their philanthropy enables our work and propels change in the Middle East.

\$100,000 or More

Anonymous (1)

Vanguard Charitable Fund

\$25,000 or More

Automattic

Fidelity Charitable Fund

Wikimedia Foundation

Prometheus Network

Atlas Network

Axel Springer Freedom Foundation

Achelis & Bodman Foundation

Dan Johnson

White & Case LLP

Human Rights Foundation

MobileCoin

\$10,000 or More

American Online Giving Foundation, Inc.

Steven Pinker

Steven Pinker Giving Fund

Ayman Singh

Kerry Propper

Steven Oliveira

Oliveira Family Charitable Fund

Paystand

\$5,000 or More

DonorsTrust

Susan Edelman

\$2,500 or More

Geral Cohen

Peter Koczanski

Anonymous

Vinicius Fortuna

Institute of Economic Affairs

Brian & Jeannie Rosenthal

Rachel Toppert

\$1,000 or More

Richard Thomas

Lou A. Villadsen

Michael Mirmak

Daniel Grossman

Katherine Meeks

Michael Stiefel

Jeff & Kelly Halpern

Brady Forrest

Michelle Supko

Karthik Sekar

Kenneth Alexander

National Christian Foundation
Rocky Mountains

Michael and Charity Coors



📍 244 Fifth Avenue, Ste 2594
New York, NY 10010

🌐 ideasbeyondborders.org

📞 646.844.4076

✉ info@ideasbeyondborders.org