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HERITAGE

Guidelines for **COVID-19**



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HERITAGE

Guidelines for COVID-19

Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen

By

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PART 2

COUNTRY OVERVIEWS

Heritage Guidelines for COVID-19

IRAQ – COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Introduction

This chapter sets out the situation of heritage and heritage management in Iraq as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will begin by describing the situation, before suggesting advice for heritage staff responding to the crisis, with links to further resources. It also contains specific sections on the effects on archaeological sites, and museums and libraries, and advice on their management, as well as specific advice on digital tools. It is primarily aimed at heritage workers, or those interested in the effects of the pandemic on the heritage of these areas.

Months before the pandemic reached Iraq, the country was facing numerous problems. An ever-weakening economy, failed stabilization efforts, and non-inclusive politics created widespread discontent amongst the population. For the last ten months, a persistent mass protest movement has been demanding political and economic change. More recently, poor healthcare has been added to their core grievances. A new government was chosen after almost half a year of political wrangling and it will need to face the challenge of steering Iraq out of the existing political and economic crises. The pandemic has heavily impacted both the private and the public sectors, which have suffered enormous losses. It is estimated that, on average, sales have declined by at least 50 per cent and that the economy will contract by 9.7 per cent this year (2020). Furthermore, the sudden drop of oil prices has crippled Iraq's profits while the country has no other economic products it can export. In fact, over 93% of the salaries in the public sector are paid from oil revenues. At current levels, Iraq will be unable to maintain payroll for the public sector – Iraq's largest employer – and it will similarly be unable to pay pensions. Unemployment is soaring, salaries are cut, inflation is rising, and many people are being reduced to poverty. Already, more than 10% of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance. In short, Iraq has fewer resources to deal with pre-existing issues, and now COVID-19 has been added to the Iraqi's concerns. Complicating the crisis are the tensions at the Iraq-Iran border between the US and Iran which have intensified since the United States attacked Iranian backed leaders in Bagdad. The Islamic State is also making a gradual comeback since its defeat in 2017. They are mainly focused in sparsely populated rural areas that spare them from the effects of coronavirus infection. They are exploiting a lull in security caused by the virus and are taking advantage of the on-going sectarian politics.

Health

Basic data

First COVID-19 case Iraq: February 22, 2020 - student from Najaf, returning from Iran.

First case Kurdistan Region of Iraq: March 1, 2020.

Most affected regions: southern and northern peripheries, and urban areas

Cases as of August 17, 2020¹

- Confirmed cases 176,931
- Fatalities 5,860
- Recovered 125,374

Numbers of confirmed cases, fatalities and recovered patients since the outbreak of COVID-19 are continuing to increase and the danger of a second wave of infections remains and

the danger of a second wave of infections remains (see for more updates at ***Resources*** [Daily updates](#)).

Underreporting

In Iraq, as elsewhere, underreporting of COVID-19 cases is inevitable due to limited testing facilities. However, the reasons for this discrepancy remain controversial. It is presumed that the government purposefully conceals the true number to avoid mass panic. The World Health Organization (WHO) denies that this is the case but some doctors and officials have confirmed this reason for underreporting. Another theory, that some cases are hidden for various socio-economic and religious reasons, is considered to be true according to other sources.

Misinformation

Technology is playing a key role in bringing people together as we maintain social distancing, but, unfortunately, it's also being used to spread misinformation and fake news, fuelling anxiety and stigma at the same time. UNICEF has partnered with telecommunication companies like Korek Telecom, Zain, and Asia Cell to combat misinformation and is communicating on multiple channels and in multiple languages. Since May they have reached approximately 14 million people in Iraq with critical information related to COVID-19 through U-report chatbot, SMS, and Viber. The National UNESCO Office to Iraq held a training course on "Safety of Journalists and fighting disinformation amid COVID-19" from 29-30 May. The participants formed a group that will work on tracking misinformation that addresses everything surrounding COVID-19 and the procedures that accompany the pandemic. (For more see the *World Health Organisation* —About COVID-19, —COVID-19 - Questions and answers, —Myth busters and *World Health Organisation*, Office of Eastern Mediterranean Region below at ***Resources: Other Resources***.)

Health infrastructure

Even before the pandemic, Iraq's healthcare system was in a chronic state of decay, suffering from sanctions, occupation, civil war, underinvestment, corruption, and neglect. The post-2003 government has failed to either rebuild a robust centralized healthcare system or to pave the way for a federalized model. Life expectancy and child mortality rates are far poorer than average for the region and the country has some of the lowest numbers of doctors and nurses per capita in the region. The Republic of Iraq includes the partially autonomous Kurdistan Region with their own parliament and cabinet. Hence, the COVID-19 regulations ordered by the Government in Iraq might differ from those in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The latter has a better healthcare as it was far less affected by the US invasion in 2003 and the resulting civil war. Since the outbreak of Covid-19 the health sector has been stretched even more. Iraq's health care infrastructure is unable to treat the large number of patients who are expected to have contracted the Covid-19 virus. Coordination across provinces and hospitals has neither reflected strong management from Baghdad nor robust ownership at the governorate level. In some regions, public healthcare clinics as well as private clinics and hospitals are reportedly being closed. There are also reports that patients are turned away from the clinics.² Advanced testing capacity is currently limited to the five provinces with WHO-approved centres. See for more information on COVID-19 in Iraq ***Resources*** [Other COVID-19 Resources on Iraq](#).

State regulations

Regulations and actions in response to the COVID-19 outbreak taken by the Government of Iraq can differ from those taken by the Kurdistan Regional Parliament of Iraq.

For different reasons, not all people are following the measures ordered by either government. In some areas, the will to follow measures is very low, which demonstrably helps to spread the virus. The imposed measures from both authorities can vary according to the gravity of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. For that reason it is very important to keep oneself abreast of the changes.

Government of Iraq

The Government of Iraq is working closely with the World Health Organization. Within Iraq, there are similarities and differences between governorates. In March, the government formed a “Special Committee” to contain the proliferation of COVID-19 and to issue the necessary related recommendations and decisions. The interdepartmental committee included representatives of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

By the end of March, the government had also created the “Higher Committee for Health and National Safety”, which limited the Special Committee’s prerogatives and reduced it to an advisory committee. The Higher Committee is an extended interdepartmental committee, has more executive power, and is chaired by the Prime Minister. Next to these committees there is a parliamentary COVID-19 crisis cell. The measures taken by the Higher Committee can change week-by-week, and depend on the changing COVID-19 situation. In general, the government regulations boil down to: social distancing; lockdown (exempting some essential services and key ministries); closing of mosques; wearing face masks in public spaces; (partial) curfew; closure of borders (including airports); restricting traffic movement to certain key transportation vehicles; a travel ban; and no funerals and religious gatherings or festivals. The regulations are enforced by security forces and not following the regulations results in fines being imposed. Depending on the COVID-19 situation, the authorities can lift any of these regulations, which can vary by region.

Updates to the government regulations can be checked at Government of Iraq – COVID-19 website (see below at **Resources: Government of Iraq - Coronavirus information**) and at the Facebook page of the Iraq Ministry of Health (see below at **Resources: Government of Iraq – Iraq Ministry of Health**).

Kurdistan Region of Iraq

For specific regulations in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, see the COVID-19 website of the Kurdistan Regional Government (see below at **Resources: Kurdistan Regional Government —COVID-19 Information and —COVID-19 situation update**). The Ministry of Health also has an Emergency Hotline Number - if you have symptoms of Coronavirus call 122. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Society

The consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak have significantly impacted various social, psychological and cultural aspects of Iraqi society.

Mental health

Soon after the first COVID-19 cases were confirmed, the most urgent needs (at that moment) were medical. However, as the lockdown lasted longer, stress levels rose. As elsewhere, tensions rose inside crowded homes. The violent conflict and the political instability had already claimed much of people’s resilience. Daily routines were broken, shopping was difficult, children had to stay inside in cramped rooms,

and jobless people were forced to stay at home, leaving families without income. Regular health services, including mental health care, have stopped and people are not being treated. Mental disorders from before COVID-19 are now getting worse. Only one NGO is working with mobile teams combining simple medical care with mental health care. Though their teams cover the most affected areas they also have teams in the rest of the country. Clearly, the badly needed psychosocial support is seriously lagging behind. For more, see below at **Resources: Other Resources**, *World Health Organisation* - Looking after our mental health and at **Other resources for Iraq** *World Health Organisation* - Mental health and psychosocial support (including addresses in Iraq for support).

Domestic violence

Iraq remains one of the most difficult places in the world to be a woman, with a fifth of women being at risk of physical violence in 2006, and 36 per cent of women suffering psychological abuse (as of 2012). These figures may also be deflated as abused women have nowhere to go, and so crimes against them go largely unreported. Furthermore, recent UN records have shown that there were more than 123 suicide attempts due to gender-based violence in April-May, 2020 only. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of calls to Gender-based Violence (GBV) and domestic violence NGO hotlines has significantly increased after confinement measures were imposed. The death on April 18 of a 20-year-old woman in Najaf, possibly at the hands of her husband, has led to national outcries. However, the Iraq Parliament has still not passed the Anti-Domestic Violence Law, which was drafted in 2015. Key amendments should be completed quickly; this bill needs to be approved urgently. Another draft law from 2014, the Jaafari Personal Status Law, which would restrict women's rights in matters of inheritance, and parental and other rights after divorce, making it easier for men to take multiple wives, and allowing girls to be married from age 9, was withdrawn 2 years later. Since 2011, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has had a law (Act No.8) on domestic violence. For more information and assistance see below at **Resources Other resources for Iraq** *Cordaid* - Country Office Erbil, Health Program Manager and *Iraq Middle East Domestic Violence Agencies*. Also at **Resources Other Resources** *Abaad* - Playing for Gender Equality Program and Gender based violence case management online course; *UNFPA* - Survivors of sexual violence need healing and justice even amid pandemic, leaders assert and Former child bride, once sold to pay debts, finds a new start; *UN Woman* - Global Database on Violence against Women, - The Shadow Pandemic: Domestic violence in the wake of COVID-19 (Video) and - Virtual Knowledge Centre to end violence against women and girls; *United Nations* - Policy Brief. The impact of COVID-19 on women; *WHO* - Displaced or refugee women are at increased risk of violence. What can WHO do? and Strengthening the health system response to violence against women (video).

Stigma

Ignoring the potential political reasons for underreporting the basic data on COVID-19, the figures are also biased by issues relating to religion and culture. In the entire region, countries are struggling with the stigma surrounding the virus and disruptions of social and religious practices. A medical anthropologist from Iraq has stated that “It is not easy to tell people that the coronavirus is stronger than God.”³ Unfortunately, these stigmas are another cause of the rapid spread of the coronavirus. Also see **Resources Other resources** *WHO* —A guide to preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19 (24 February 2020) and What can you do to fight stigma associated with COVID-19? (Video).

Religion

Key religious authorities such as Grand Ayatollah Sistani have called for compliance with the curfew and have mobilized charitable institutions. However, conservative, and largely Shia, Iraqis have flouted government curfews imposed to stem the coronavirus pandemic.

The populist Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr and other conservative clerics have refused to warn their followers of the need to socially isolate themselves, and instead allow large gatherings at religious shrines. He added that he hoped everyone would complete their visits quickly while following medical guidance so they would not be a source of infection to others. Yet, cases of coronavirus spreading in shrine cities as a direct result of this practice are known. When, on March 20, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims - many probably from Iran - defied the government's orders by converging on a Shiite shrine in Baghdad, the Iraqi government was forced to deploy troops. After the event, many new cases were found in eastern Baghdad. A similar case occurred in Erbil, where a significant rise of infections was determined after a banned funeral gathering took place regardless. Some of the fear surrounding the disease stems from the Muslim rituals surrounding death. The Islamic tradition requires swift burial, and the longer the delay, the more people fear for the soul of the deceased. Adding to the problems is the tradition of washing the bodies of people who have just died, which the authorities fear could also spread the virus. Some Muslims believe that the virus means that God is displeased with them, or maybe it is a punishment for a sin, so they don't want others to see that they are sick. Muqtada al-Sadr blamed the coronavirus pandemic on homosexuality and that the virus was a "message from Heaven".⁴

Culture

Local conservative clerics and traditional families have resisted the attempts of female relatives to get tested for coronavirus, fearing that, in the case of a positive test, they would need to be quarantined or treated in the hospital and that would bring "dishonour" and "shame" on the families.⁵ The aversion to quarantine and the reluctance to admit illness may also help to explain why the number of confirmed cases in Iraq is relatively low, and why some people delay seeking medical help until they are catastrophically ill.

Illness is stigmatized in Iraq. Families have intervened and removed female patients from medical care facilities, considering the quarantine to be "dishonourable" as the woman would have had to live outside the family home without a male chaperone and guardian present. Some families have even organised demonstrations outside hospitals that quarantine coronavirus patients. Quarantining those who are infected imposes a double humiliation in many Iraqi communities. First, it ensures that everyone in the neighbourhood will learn about the illness. Second, if the victim is a man, it signifies that he is no longer able to protect his wife and his children and, so, has fallen short of fulfilling his role in the family. One doctor explained that —The worst thing in the world isn't to die, but it's to die away from your family and your community and to have no control over what happens to your body.⁶ Public health officers consider the stigma associated with illness and quarantine as one of the biggest obstacles in fighting COVID-19. In an effort to overcome the stigma and put together an accurate picture of the scope of the epidemic, the Iraqi Health Ministry has resorted to random testing. But this program has brought a new set of troubles. Iraqi social media users have condemned the trend, with some using an Arabic-language hash tag that translates to "epidemic of ignorance".

Humanitarian aid

Since the invasion of the Coalition in 2003, Iraq has become ever more dependent on international aid. In the COVID-19 era, this dependency has grown, particularly following the crisis in the oil market, which pays for most government salaries. In the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) *Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19* (see **Resources**, [Other resources](#)) the humanitarian needs for Iraq more than doubled. Thus UN humanitarian agencies have scaled up their support, mainly working with and through the government. Both the humanitarian programs and the field missions experience great difficulty in planning, monitoring and implementing critical humanitarian activities. The lockdown and travel bans interfered directly with the programs, but also indirectly, for example by limiting legal assistance (restricting access to proper documents) or causing liquidity problems (limiting access to cash to pay staff and procure needed supplies). These are almost insoluble challenges humanitarian actors to face. Most of the funds go to providing medical supplies and equipment, and facilitating their local production.

Many humanitarian organisations give special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable people. People on the move (internally displaced people, refugees, and migrants) and living in crowded conditions are particularly exposed, but children, people with disabilities and women are also very vulnerable. Non-governmental organisations are concentrating their assistance in the most affected areas. With the help of local providers, awareness raising campaigns are being set up. Food and cash distributions are being organised and even some small-scale income-generating projects have started. Hotlines have been opened to give direct psychosocial support and to help with stress management. For more information see **Resources**: [Other Resources for Iraq – Arab.org](#). NGO Directory of Iraq; *Cordaid*; *Humanitarian Response*: Iraq; *ICRC*: Iraq; *ICR*: Iraq; *Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI)*; *NEFI*: Iraq; *Reliefweb*: Iraq; *Ummah Welfare Trust*: Iraq; *UNDP*: Iraq; *UNOCHA*: Iraq and at [Other Resources](#) see *Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)* and *UNOCHA - Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19*.

Heritage

The invasion of Iraq by the Coalition in 2003 had many adverse effects on Iraq's cultural heritage. Following the initial devastation of the country's heritage during and in the years immediately following the occupation, the continuous violence, especially by ISIS, continued to cause damage. The sectarian politics since 2003 have eroded government heritage institutions that must constantly compete with the privileged religious endowments.⁷ Today, as the confirmed cases and fatalities as a result of COVID-19 continue to rise, pulling resources from other sectors, the heritage sector is struggling for survival.

Many cities have been left in ruins since they were recaptured from ISIS and now there is even less chance that they will be rebuilt. Reconstruction projects have paused which may lead to partial or total loss of any heritage remaining in those cities. At the Mosul Museum, for example, reconstruction was just getting started. With the discontinuation of some of these projects and others moved to remote support for a certain time, the cultural and social healing that is essential in the post-ISIS era is at risk. Museums, libraries, and other cultural venues were forced to close, leaving those whose livelihoods depend on these jobs in a precarious position. Regular heritage maintenance activities are also prevented, such as building and collections maintenance, preservation and conservation, climate control, pest management, security, courses and

training, leaving institutions in danger from neglect. As is common in a crisis, historic buildings are almost unnoticeably destroyed; city landmarks are turned into places for personal use; and construction or agricultural activities encroach more quickly onto archaeological sites.

State employees suffer from salary cuts while their official duties are totally or partly suspended. Others, like guards at archaeological sites, have lost their jobs, yet looting during the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased.⁸ Pressed by circumstances, heritage workers are forced to look for other jobs. There is a danger that they will not return to their former positions and, consequently, the sector will lose their experience and expertise. Cultural heritage sites are a key part of the government's tourism policy, and of some NGO sustainable development programmes. With the closure of this sector, many key workers have lost their jobs in the associated cultural events industry and the handicraft industries. Additionally, the lockdown indirectly threatens Iraq's intangible heritage as traditional, religious and family gatherings are forbidden. These include Friday prayers at the mosque, pilgrimages, funerals, weddings, and breaking of the fast and Eid al Fitr during Ramadan. Over the longer term, this might cause harm to cultural identities.

For more see **Resources** Other resources for Iraq *American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR); National Organization For Architectural Heritage; Save the Tigris; The Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TARII); The British Institute for the Study of Iraq; The Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH); The Nahrein Network; UNESCO National Office to Iraq; Università di Bologna. ALMA MATER STUDIORUM.* At **Resources** Other resources see *Arab League's Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO); Arab Network for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage (ANSCH); Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO); Rashid International and UNESCO - Culture and COVID-19.*

Recommendations

Heritage Emergency Funding

In the UNOCHA *Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19*, there is no cluster for Culture or Heritage and much humanitarian aid today is redirected towards fighting COVID-19 and assistance to the most vulnerable. Many aid budgets have been reduced, including in the heritage sector. While several countries created emergency funds for their own heritage sector, recognising the devastating impact of COVID-19, today very few international organisations will fund heritage organisations in emergency situations.

Here are a few examples (for more see the ANSCH website under COVID-19):

- *ALIPH Foundation (International Alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas):* ALIPH supports a wide variety of projects to protect heritage that is endangered, under threat, or have suffered from negligence brought about by conflict.
<https://www.aliph-foundation.org/>
- *British Council. Cultural Protection Fund:* It is aimed at helping to create sustainable opportunities for economic and social development through building capacity to foster, safeguard and promote cultural heritage.
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-protection-fund>

- *Gerda Henkel Foundation. Funding Initiative Patrimonies*: The Patrimonies funding initiative considers projects that focus on the preservation of historical cultural heritage first and foremost in crisis regions and, in some cases, will enable scientific research in the fields of history, archaeology, and art history.
<https://www.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/en/patrimonies>
- *Global Heritage Fund: Global Heritage Solidarity Fund*: Putting people first in our response, we protect cultural heritage now — and ensure that coming generations will survive to protect heritage in the future.
<https://globalheritagefund.org/global-heritage-solidarity-fund/>
- *Goethe Institut Iraq: Spotlight Iraq 2020* is a support program for cultural creators living in Iraq. It financially supports art and culture projects._
<https://www.goethe.de/ins/iq/en/kul/sup/sir.html>
Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/goetheinstitut.iraq>
- *International Institute for the Conservation of Museum Objects (ICC). Opportunities Fund*: This fund is for helping to create a sustainable and resilient conservation community. However, you need to join ICC first._
<https://www.iiconservation.org/about/awards/opportunities>
- *Un Ponte Per*: The conservation of Iraq's cultural and environmental heritage has been an integral part of Un Ponte Per's work in support of the Iraqi population for many years. <https://www.unponteper.it/en/tutela-del-patrimonio-culturale/>
- *Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development. Cultural Emergency Response (CER)*: The Cultural Emergency Response programme (CER) helps protect threatened heritage. <https://princeclausfund.org/save-heritage-now>
- *UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund*: The fund is meant for UNESCO member states, and thus government organisations, to enable them to respond quickly and effectively to crises resulting from armed conflicts and disasters caused by natural and human-made hazards all over the world.
<https://en.unesco.org/themes/protecting-our-heritage-and-fostering-creativity/emergencyfund2>
Also see http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/hef/pdf/Iraq_2016-2018.pdf
- *World Heritage Fund*: The World Heritage Fund provides about \$4 million annually to support activities requested by States Parties in need of international assistance in managing their World Heritage sites. It is, therefore, only for governments and for World Heritage sites.
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/funding/>
- *World Monuments Relief Fund*: No information available.
<https://www.wmf.org/world-monuments-relief-fund>

Humanitarian assistance for heritage staff

Many heritage workers have lost their jobs and are struggling to make ends meet. For them, as with others, humanitarian aid in cash assistance, food assistance and the like, can be applied for at charitable (religious) organisations and humanitarian organisations. In order to improve your chances of a successful application, it is best to apply as a group - the larger the group the better e.g. all museum staff in a city.

For a list of a few international humanitarian organisations with country offices in Iraq, see below at **Resources: Other resources for Iraq**. Staff that are still employed and need medical supplies and/or personal protection equipment can also turn to one of these humanitarian organisations.

Income-generating projects

One way to survive the double crisis is to consider income-generating activities. Such projects consist of small community-level businesses, managed by a group of people to increase their household income through livelihood diversification. Such projects are well-known in agriculture and arts and crafts, but the idea can be applied to any sector. It is different from commercial activities organised by the cultural institutions themselves, like opening a museum shop to sell arts and crafts products or publications. In the case of income generating activities, the revenues go directly to the group of people who started the project.

It is important is to realize what your —Unique Selling Point is. It could be producing copies of iconic artefacts (assuming no permissions are needed), production of publications, organizing online training or courses, or online cultural activities. As traveling is, at the least, very difficult or forbidden, products need to be offered online. However, staff could also set up projects outside the heritage sector, like producing masks or disinfectants. Alternatively, projects could be started that indirectly benefit the institution staff work. One good example is to start community-based income generating activities based around a local archaeological site to mitigate subsistence looting that may be occurring by finding another way to use it to bring money into the community. Clearly these kinds of projects require a lot of creative thinking. For funding staff, you could propose an income generating project at humanitarian organisations (see below at **Resources**: Other resources for Iraq).

See for more on income generation projects:

- *Food and Agriculture Organisation*. Income generating activities (IGAs): <http://www.fao.org/3/x0206e/x0206e03.htm>
- *Museum and Heritage*. Income generation: <https://advisor.museumandheritage.com/features/income-generation-how-to-increase-revenue-in-museums/>

Expertise

Some staff or organisations feel they need expert advice. In that case, see under the specific heritage sector chapters elsewhere in the Guidelines. It should be noted that many people underestimate the knowledge and expertise that is around them, in their own country or another MENA country. Local expertise has no language barrier, you deal with a more culturally sensitive organisation, and, often, the suggested advice is appropriate to the region. In short, seek advice as close to home as possible. If that is not possible, it is best to target one (foreign) heritage institution you feel comfortable with. Develop a relation with that institution where you can reach out with all kinds of questions.

If you are seeking academic knowledge, for the latest academic articles in a specific heritage field you can consider:

- *Academia*: <https://www.academia.edu/>
- *ResearchGate*: <https://www.researchgate.net/login>

Both require an account, but will not pass on your details, and many academics use them to share their work. In addition, many UK universities now have an Institutional Research Data Repository, where they place copies of any articles they write for free access.

Tasks

A crisis can sometimes be an opportunity. Cultural institutions where staff have been reduced, can still work on alternative tasks. This might be an opportunity to take care of overdue maintenance, provide extra training for staff, and take on non-job related but essential tasks like security improvement, or climate or pest control management. Switching tasks gives staff a chance to learn more about the wider work processes of the organisation which, ultimately, is very advantageous for the organisation.

If a cultural institution is closed there is still a chance to make new plans, design new strategies, and update collection catalogues, executed and coordinated by digital tools. And do not forget to start a heritage awareness raising campaign, as many might not know what you are doing, how important your work is, and what the role of cultural heritage in society in general is. (See for more Part III of the Guidelines - *Basic Digital Tools*).

Further assistance

The potency of laymen is often underestimated. Groups organized around different issues could have experience with issues your organization is struggling with, like awareness raising campaigns, the use of digital tools, networking, and marketing strategies.

Think of youth groups, women's organisations, nature conservation groups, students, local peace committees and community groups. It may be worthwhile contacting them and putting out a call for assistance. You could also combine an awareness raising campaign with a call for assistance, for example, to join a neighbourhood watch. For this purpose you should open an emergency number. In the recent past, imams, mosque visitors and entire neighbourhoods have helped cultural institutions to move their collections voluntarily, protected repositories and cultural institutions, and communities have also defended archaeological sites. The latter is very important as guards and antiquities police, often involuntarily, have been forced to leave sites unprotected. If security forces or police are not protecting an institution or archaeological site you could, of course, always request that they do so.

Networking

During the present pandemic, it will be very difficult to acquire funds for heritage emergencies. Many of the problems, however, might be solved through cooperation. Crossing the divide and leaving political, religious and ethnic differences behind will provide even more possibilities for solving some of your problems. Heritage is not, in itself, political - people make it political. Similarly, bringing partners from diverse heritage sectors together is very rewarding as many heritage workers face the same, or similar, problems, and it is a great learning opportunity. Networks can be created on a "horizontal" level – between, for example, staff in similar roles, like conservators, librarians, archaeologists – or on a vertical level, heritage wide, such as all museum staff. Today, social media can be very useful to connect, enabling people to communicate quickly with each other and organise themselves in small groups, via, for example, Whatsapp or Telegram. You can also create (closed) discussion groups on Facebook, or LinkedIn, or you could join already existing groups. There are downsides to this: 1) many of them are not safe and anybody can "listen in"; 2) your data will often be used for commercial purposes without your knowledge. Be on the alert for Privacy and Safety concerns. If you want a safer internet connection, you can use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) that can protect your privacy from hackers. (For details, see Part III of the Guidelines - *Basic Digital Tools*.) Find some examples below:

- *ANSCH*. Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/ANSCH-110334927271070/?ref=search&_tn_=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARDdn0BQiiUUMWW53VQBUZuL6tGY9alFi-zB9R8wtOiKMT-4cOqFBcjtF5WzwZWeMX_jOB1xYQZfpf9
- *Cultural leaders*: <https://www.weforum.org/communities/cultural-leaders>
- *Cultural Heritage Conservation Science. Research and practice*. LinkedIn Group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/140198/>
- *Erbil Hub* (apply to join): <https://www.globalshapers.org/hubs/erbil-hub>
- *Heritage for All*. Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/214091372432295/?ref=br_rs
- *ICOM Arab*. Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1207313432621070/>
- *ICOMOS*. LinkedIn Group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1623567/>

- *World Economic Forum. Arts & Culture Global Solidarity Network:*
<https://www.weforum.org/covid-action-platform/projects/arts-culture-global-solidarity-network>

Resources

Daily updates

- *Corona Tracker. Iraq:*
<https://www.coronatracker.com/country/iraq/>
- *Government of Iraq. Coronavirus daily updates:*
<https://coronavirus.iq>
- *Worldometers. Iraq:*
<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/iraq/>
- *World Health Organisation. Office of Eastern Mediterranean Region:*
<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiN2ExNWl3ZGQtZDk3My00YzE2LWFjYmQtNGMwZjk0OWQ1MjFhIiwidCI6ImY2MTBjMGI3LWJkMjQtNGIzOS04MTBiLTNkYzI4MGFmYjU5MCI6ImMiOjh9>

Government of Iraq

- *Government of Iraq*
 - Coronavirus information: <https://gds.gov.iq/covid-19/>
 - Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/GovernmentofIraq/>
 - Twitter Group:
https://twitter.com/IraqiGovt/status/1268106555121156096?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Eembeddedtimeline%7Ctwterm%5Eprofile%3AIraqiGovt%7Ctwcon%5Etimelinedata%7Ctwurl=https%3A%2F%2Fgds.gov.iq%2Fcabinet-approves-measure-to-allow-final-year-primary-school-students-to-graduate-based-on-half-term-exam-results%2F
- *Iraq Ministry of Health*
 - Website: <https://moh.gov.iq>
 - Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/MOH.GOV.IQ/>
 - Media and Communications Commission, Ministry of Health, World Health Organization - Corona virus Iraq: <https://coronavirus.iq/>

Kurdistan Regional Government

- *Kurdistan Regional Government*
 - COVID-19 Information: <https://gov.krd/coronavirus-en/>
 - COVID-19 situation update: <https://gov.krd/coronavirus-en/situation-update/>
 - Emergency call 122 - lines are open 24/7
 - Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/Kurdistan/>
 - General Board of Tourism <http://bot.gov.krd/tourism-board/official-site-general-board-tourism-kurdistan-iraq>
 - Twitter Group: <https://twitter.com/Kurdistan>
 - Instagram Group: <https://www.instagram.com/kurdistan/>

Other COVID-19 Resources on Iraq

- *International Committee of the Red Cross. COVID-19: ICRC response in Iraq:*
<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/covid-19-icrc-response-iraq>

- *International Organization for Migration (IOM)* - Displacement Tracking Device – Dashboard COVID-19 (Iraq): <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/COVID19>
- *United Nation Population Fund (UNPFA)*.
 - COVID-19 Situation Report No. 5 for UNPFA, Arab States (30 June 2020): <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/covid-19-situation-report-no-5-unfpa-arab-states>
 - COVID-19 Population Vulnerability Dashboard, Iraq: <https://covid19-map.unfpa.org/>
- *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)*. Humanitarian Response - COVID-19-IRAQ Weekly Situation reports: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/covid-19>
- *Wikipedia*. COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq. Statistics updated daily: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic_in_Iraq
- *World Health Organisation*
 - Dynamic Dashboard for Iraq: <http://ow.ly/6Ghn50z9UTh>
 - Country Office Iraq News: <http://www.emro.who.int/irq/iraq-news/>
 - Country Office Iraq Twitter Group: <https://twitter.com/WHOIraq>
- *World Health Organisation*. Office of Eastern Mediterranean Region: <http://www.emro.who.int/index.html>

Other resources for Iraq

- *American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR)*
 - Homepage: <http://www.asor.org/about-asor/>
 - Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI) (report): <https://www.asor.org/chi/reports/special-reports/Palmyra-Heritage-Adrift>
- *Arab.org*. NGO Directory of Iraq <https://arab.org/countries/iraq/>
- *Cordaid*. Country Office Erbil: <https://www.cordaid.org/en/countries/iraq/>
- *Humanitarian Response*. Iraq: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq>
- *International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC)*. Iraq: <https://www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work/middle-east/iraq>
- *International Rescue Committee (ICR)*. Iraq: <https://www.rescue.org/country/iraq>
- *Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI)* Homepage <https://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/>
- *Iraq Middle East Domestic Violence Agencies*: <https://www.hotpeachpages.net/mideast/index.html#Iraq>
- *National Organization For Architectural Heritage* Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/National-Organization-For-Architectural-Heritage-1924423381116321/>
- *Near East Foundation (NEF)*. Iraq <https://www.near-east.org/where-we-work/iraq/>
- *Reliefweb*. Iraq: <https://reliefweb.int/country/irq>
- *Save the Tigris* <https://www.savethetigris.org/about/>
- *The Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TARII)* <https://www.tarii.org/>

- *The British Institute for the Study of Iraq*
<http://www.bisi.ac.uk/>
- *The Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH)*
 - Homepage <https://www.artcons.udel.edu/outreach/global-engagement/iraqi-institute>
 - Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/Iraqiinst>
- *The Nahrein Network*
 - Homepage: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/nahrein/>
 - Twitter Group: https://twitter.com/NahreinNetwork?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Eembeddedtimeline%7Ctwterm%5Eprofile%3ANahreinNetwork&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ucl.ac.uk%2Fnahrein%2F
- *Ummah Welfare Trust. Iraq:* <https://uwt.org/emergency-appeals/iraq-appeal/>
- *UN Agencies in Iraq.* (occasional) COVID-19 news - link to agencies:
https://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=1543&Itemid=655&lang=en
- *UN Woman*
 - **Helpline Iraq: 110**
- *UNESCO National Office to Iraq.* (occasional) COVID-19 news:
<https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/baghdad>
- *United Nations Development Fund (UNDP).* Iraq:
<https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home.html>
- *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).* Iraq situation:
<https://reporting.unhcr.org/iraqsituation>
- *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).* Iraq:
<https://fts.unocha.org/countries/106/summary/2020>
- *Università di Bologna. ALMA MATER STUDIUM – Education and Cultural Heritage Enhancement for Social Cohesion in Iraq:*
<https://site.unibo.it/eduu/en>
- *World Health Organization.* Mental health and psychosocial support (including addresses in Iraq for support):
<http://www.emro.who.int/mhps/index.html>

Other resources

- *Abaad.*
 - Playing for Gender Equality Program
<https://www.abaadmena.org/game>
 - Gender based violence case management online course
<http://gbvcm-course.abaadmena.org/>
- *Aga Khan Development Network.* COVID-19 information:
 - Information on homemade and disposable masks:
<https://www.akdn.org/publication/covid-19-information-homemade-and-disposable-masks>
 - Staying safe at home and work: <https://www.akdn.org/publication/staying-safe-home-and-work>
- *Aga Khan University - CoronaCheck.* (via Google Play):
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.edu.aku.akuhccheck>
- *Arab Network for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage (ANSCH)- COVID-19:*
<https://ansch.heritageforpeace.org/guidelines/>

- *Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)*
<http://www.annd.org/english/page.php?pageId=1>
- *Arab League's Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO)*
<https://www.alecso.org/nsite/ar/>
- *Disaster Ready. Understanding Burnout During COVID-19. Self-Care & Resilience (AR):*
<https://ready.csod.com/ui/lms-learning-details/app/material/82ac32f9-1892-483a-87e0-2f8005ffe51d>
- *Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)*
<https://www.icesco.org/?lang=en>
- *Rashid International*
<https://rashid-international.org/>
- *United Nations. Policy Brief. The impact of COVID-19 on women:*
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>
- *UN Women.*
 - *Global Database on Violence against Women*
<https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/syrian-arab-republic?pageNumber=2>
 - *The Shadow Pandemic: Domestic violence in the wake of COVID-19 (Video)*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llNP_bW-o0
 - *Virtual Knowledge Centre to end violence against women and girls:*
<https://www.endvawnow.org/en/need-help>
- *UNESCO. Culture and COVID-19:*
<https://en.unesco.org/news/culture-covid-19-impact-and-response-tracker>
- *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19:*
<https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/952/summary>
- *United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).*
 - *Survivors of sexual violence need healing and justice even amid pandemic, leaders assert:*
<https://www.unfpa.org/news/survivors-sexual-violence-need-healing-and-justice-even-amid-pandemic-leaders-assert>
 - *Former child bride, once sold to pay debts, finds a new start*
<https://www.unfpa.org/news/former-child-bride-once-sold-pay-debts-finds-new-start>
- *World Health Organisation*
 - *A guide to preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19 (24 February 2020)*
<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/a-guide-to-preventing-and-addressing-social-stigma-associated-with-covid-19>
 - *About COVID-19:* <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/about-covid-19.html>
 - *COVID-19 - Questions and answers:* <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/questions-and-answers.html>
 - *Displaced or refugee women are at increased risk of violence. What can WHO do?*
<https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/displaced-refugee-women-violence-risk/en/>
 - *Health Alert on WhatsApp (Arabic):* wa.me/41225017023?text=
 - *Looking after our mental health:* <https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/healthyathome/healthyathome---mental-health>

- Myth busters: <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/myth-busters.html> and <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>
- Protect yourself and others: <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/protect-yourself-and-others.html>
- Strengthening the health system response to violence against women (video): https://youtu.be/Qc_GHITvTmI
- What can you do to fight stigma associated with COVID-19? (Video). <https://youtu.be/vinh0IIG1p0>

¹ World Health Organisation, Office of Eastern Mediterranean Region (August 23, 2020). Retrieved from <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiN2ExNWl3ZGQtdk3My00YzE2LWFjYmQtNGMwZjk0OWQ1MjFhIiwidCI6ImY2MTBjMGI3LWJkMjQtNGIzOS04MTBiLTNkYzI4MGFmYjU5MCIslmMiOjh9>

² Allinson, Tom (April 3, 2020). Coronavirus in Iraq: Bullets, repression, Iran trump COVID-19. *Deutsche Welle*. <https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-in-iraq-bullets-repression-iran-trump-covid-19/a-52624119>

³ Rubin, Alissa J. (April 15, 2020). Stigma Hampers Iraqi Efforts to Fight the Coronavirus. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/world/middleeast/iraq-coronavirus-stigma-quarantine.html>

⁴ [News desk] (March 28, 2020). Prominent Iraqi cleric Moqtada al-Sadr blames coronavirus pandemic on gay marriage. *The New Arab*. <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2020/3/28/prominent-iraqi-cleric-blames-coronavirus-pandemic-on-gay-marriage>

⁵ [News desk] (March 29, 2020). The Iraq Report: Political paralysis slows fight against coronavirus amid economic woes. *The New Arab*. <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2020/3/31/the-iraq-report-coronavirus-fight-slowed-by-government-paralysis>

⁶ Rubin, Alissa J. (April 14, 2020). Stigma Hampers Iraqi Efforts to Fight the Coronavirus. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/world/middleeast/iraq-coronavirus-stigma-quarantine.html>

⁷ See Tejjgeler, Rene and Mehiyar Kathem (forthcoming 2021). Political ruptures and the cultural heritage of Iraq. *Handbook of Sustainable Heritage* (Routledge).

⁸ Matthews, Roger (June 18, 2020). Looting of antiquities has increased under lockdown – here's how we're working to prevent this in Iraq. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/looting-of-antiquities-has-increased-under-lockdown-heres-how-were-working-to-prevent-this-in-iraq-139528>