

PEACE AND FREEDOM ORGANIZATION

رێکخراوی ئاشتی و ئازادی
منظمة السلام والحرية

PROFILE 2017



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Peace and Freedom Organization

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

Vision

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

Mission

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

Programs

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

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

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

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1 INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANIZATION

1.1 REASON FOR EXISTENCE

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

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

1.2 A CONSTITUENCY-BASED ORGANIZATION

Peace and Freedom Organization is dedicated to developing a true membership-based non-governmental organization which will develop a strong constituency of community members who will be given a large role in guiding the work of the organization.

A call for membership was opened in January 2016 and appealed to individuals to become members of Peace and Freedom Organization. The call was widely distributed through social media and to this day, a total of 87 members have joined the organization. Most members are living in Iraq but some members are currently living in Europe and the United States.

Peace and Freedom Organization held its first general conference on September 21st and 22nd 2016 in Erbil, on the occasion of the International Peace Day. The conference was attended by 85 members and was broadcast live on social media to allow participation to other members and individuals interested to follow developments. The annual narrative and financial report of activities for 2015 was presented and the strategic plan of the organization developed by its core staff was presented for approval to the members. The new administrative board of the organization was further elected among members attending the event and the board was requested to appoint the general director of the organization.

1.3 INITIAL STEPS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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

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

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

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

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

PFO has supported the “Kulluna Muwatinun” (We are All Citizens) initiative striving to promote diversity and protection of minorities in Iraq by supporting the young people representing diverse ethnic and religious communities to engage in advocacy initiatives and strengthening dialogue with political leaders. While visits to the Iraqi Parliament and the Prime Minister of the KRG’s office for a group of young people, youth advisory councils were formed and trained in the governorates of Ninewa, Kirkuk and Basra.

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

In just 2 years, PFO has extended its work across the Kurdistan Region and is now reaching out to other parts of Iraq including Baghdad, Kirkuk and Basra. It has developed key strategic partnerships with international organizations such as Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), PAX , Un Ponte Per (UPP) and (FHI360).

2 PEACE BUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION PROGRAM

2.1 PROGRAM AIM

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

2.2 PROGRAM STRATEGY

According to the strategy plan of PFO, the following strategies are to be used in the frame of this program:

1. Raise awareness and capacity of communities to engage in dialogue and promote peace with a focus on youth and members of displaced, refugee and host communities.
2. Promote a positive role for parties engaged in spreading violence and hate speech such as religious leaders, journalists and other radicalized elements of the community.
3. Engage in advocacy with local and national governmental authorities to develop policies ensuring protection of diversity, promotion of peaceful co-existence and participation of youth in peace-building processes
4. Build alliances to promote peaceful co-existence and social cohesion in Iraq with other NGOs and networks.

2.3 PROJECTS AND EXPERIENCE

Kulluna Muwatinun – “We are all Citizens” – Building capacity of Iraqi youth to promote dialogue, address sectarian violence and engage in advocacy with governmental authorities (December 2015 – March 2017 – PAX)

Throughout 2016, PFO supported the youth network “Kulluna Muwatinun” which gathers and mobilizes young people from diverse religious and ethnic communities in Iraq by enhancing their role in advocacy processes.

At the governorate level, PFO supported young people to organize themselves in an aim to participate in local decision-making processes through **forming youth advisory committees** to the local governorate council. As a pilot initiative launched in the governorate of Ninewa proved to be successful, youth advisory committees were created in the governorates of Kirkuk and Basra. The youth advisory committees, composed of 11 youth representing the diversity of communities living in the governorate, after receiving intensive capacity building, have been dedicated to **lobby members of the governorate council and address policies impacting youth and peace-building issues**. The youth advisory committees have been successful in creating a space for young people to open dialogue with their decision makers and address the need for young people to be included in decision making processes.

At the national level, PFO participated in **building the capacity of the youth network to engage in evidence-based advocacy**. As capacity of youth to conduct scientific field researches was developed in order to study sectarianism and gender issues, they were coached to conduct these researches. A total of 21 researches tackling diverse issues such as the occurrence of sectarianism, demographic change, the impact of violence on women and children, the promotion of hate speech by religious leaders and media, were produced. These studies were further used by the youth to engage in advocacy and address decision makers. More extensive studies were produced such as a research tackling the seizing of properties belonging to minority groups in Nahla and Baghdad, and the impact of emigration of young people. These studies were presented in conferences that led to further dialogue held between youth and decision makers.

PFO further organized opportunities for the youth network to **address national decision makers during visits at the Iraqi and Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament**. 8 youth leaders visited twice the Iraqi Parliament and addressed the vice-speaker of the Parliament, the Human Rights Committee, and other Parliament members on policies that affect diversity and promote sectarianism. Youth leaders also met the Chief of Staff of Iraqi Kurdistan President Barzani.

PFO focused on **supporting young people from Ninewa Governorate to organize themselves** and to enhance their role in promoting peaceful co-existence and social cohesion, especially as the liberation of Mosul is advancing and high levels of mis-trust characterize current relationships among the diverse community groups living in Ninewa plain. PFO provided **intensive capacity building to a new youth organization**, Life Makers, which focuses on promoting social cohesion in the governorate of Ninewa. PFO also brought all youth groups working in Ninewa together to reflect on their role to promote peaceful co-existence. The initiative led to **designing a vision from the youth towards the future of Ninewa to ensure peace**. The vision, which includes a strategic plan for the role of the youth to promote peace in Ninewa which identifies a number of initiatives that should be developed, was presented to decision makers and international organizations to mobilize further support.

Paths to Social Cohesion, Co-existence and Peace - Building capacity of journalists from Ninewa plain – Zummar, Rabia, Sinoune, Wana, Sinjar – to promote peace and social cohesion (December 2015, March 2016 – UPP)

In order to promote peace and social cohesion in the recently liberated territories in the North of Ninewa and Sinjar, PFO focused on **building the capacity of journalists living in these areas to promote their role in countering hate speech and developing a media environment of balanced opinions.**

A 5 days training was conducted for 15 journalists who were further tasked to write several articles on the reality of Sinjar, Zummar and other towns, highlighting issues negatively impacting on the development of a peaceful environment. Journalists shared the written articles on a facebook page that was opened for the project: <https://goo.gl/J9INeh>

Articles were regularly posted on the page which has received nearly 20.000 likes.

Tasawi: Providing vocational trainings to women from the host and IDP communities in computer and English (April - June 2017 – FHI360)

34 women from the host and IDP communities in Erbil are coming together several times per week to develop vocational skills in english and computer. While **women obtain new skills** that will allow them to find new job opportunities and generate income in order to become financially independent and be able to provide for their families, the trainings are also a mean **to strengthen relationships between the host and IDP community** and address existing social tensions.

Ninewa paths to peace and social cohesion (Zumaar, Rabiaa, Sinouni, Wana) (December 2016 – March 2017 – UPP in partnership with Tahrir AL Numuzujiya and RID)

PFO opened **2 youth centers to serve the community of Zumar and Wana.** The youth center has been hosting diverse activities for young people coming from diverse community groups in an attempt to develop trust and promote social cohesion. **Volunteer youth teams** were established and organized diverse **social activities promoting dialogue and campaigns** on co-existence.

Mesopotamian Youth for democratic governance, social cohesion and reconciliation in Iraq (March 2017 - December 2020 – UPP)

The project promotes democratic governance and social cohesion in Iraq by improving coordination and empowering direct action of youth within local Civil Society Organizations, to advance peacebuilding.

As a partner organization in the project, PFO will coordinate a **working group on Media as an agent promoting Tolerance and democracy.** The working group will be youth-led and will be joined by unions and CSOs. The working group will be in charge of launching awareness and advocacy activities across Iraq.

PFO will as well launch the **Kurdistan Social Forum** by organizing 5 working groups in the Kurdistan Region in preparation of the main event. In the frame of the KSF, several awareness and advocacy campaigns will as well be organized.

[Providing social peace in Diyala Province \(Khanaqeen, Baquba, Jalawla\) \(April 2017 – April 2018 – UNDP, in partnership with Al Mesalla for human resources and RID\)](#)

The project aims at **strengthening social cohesion and co-existence among various identity groups including displaced and host communities living in Diyala Province**, with a particular focus on the cities of Khanaqeen, Baquba and Jalawla. PFO will be specifically working in the district of Baquba.

A **baseline study will first be conducted to map the conflict**, identify the actors, issues and structures of conflict and identify possibilities to manage and ease the conflict. Surveys, focus groups and interviews will be tools used to collect the data.

Social spaces will be opened in each city in close collaboration with the local government and the university, where **social activities promoting peace and reconciliation including community dialogue sessions** will be regularly organized targeting the community.

Capacity of community peace actors will be built through trainings and will be tasked to manage local conflict as well as launching a **series of peace, trust-building and reconciliation initiatives**.

3 FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS PROGRAM

3.1 PROGRAM AIM

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

3.2 PROGRAM STRATEGY

According to the strategy plan of PFO, the following strategies are to be used in the frame of this program:

1. *Raise awareness and capacities of community members* with a focus on women, youth and minorities on key principles of human rights and freedoms
2. Engage in *monitoring and reporting of violations of human rights and freedoms* with a focus on minorities and worker's rights
3. *Build capacity of non-governmental institutions* to promote individual and collective rights and freedoms, NGOs and syndicates in particular
4. *Engage in advocacy with governmental institutions* to develop policies ensuring promotion of human rights and freedoms.

3.3 PROJECTS AND EXPERIENCE

Transparency in the extractive industries in Kurdistan (October – December 2015 - NPA)

This project allowed the **translation of the International Transparency Standards manual produced by EITI** (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) **to Kurdish language**. The manual sets some global transparency standards to improve governance of natural resources. The material is available to be widely shared and can be used as a manual for trainings on management and transparency of extractive industries.

PFO further **trained 15 NGOs from across Kurdistan on the EITI standards** and the role of NGOs in reporting on transparency issues within the extractive industries. Participants received TOT skills and will be able to share the information with others.

A conference was then organized to **discuss transparency within extractive industries in Kurdistan**. MPs, NGOs and academics discussed the **need to strengthen legislation in regards to transparency matters** and further identify the experience and role of NGOs in ensuring transparency.

Promoting Workers' Rights and Freedom of Syndication in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan (July 2016 – December 2019 – NPA)

This project looked at **identifying the gaps existing in the legal framework related to workers' rights and freedom of syndication and monitoring the violations that are occurring in 6 governorates across Iraq.**

PFO produced a **baseline research which outlined the international, regional and national existing frameworks that provide protection to workers' rights and freedom of syndication.** It studies the **current existing laws in Iraq and KRG and identified gaps and amendments needed in the legal framework** to ensure protection and freedom as well as issues related to enacting and implementing the existing laws. Interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires collecting opinions of 1000 individuals helped in better understanding the environment in terms of workers' rights and freedom of syndication. The research was distributed in 3 languages, arabic, kurdisch and english.

PFO conducted **monitoring of violations impacting workers' rights and freedom of syndication in 6 governorates:** Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, Sulaymania, Erbil and Dohuk. The monitoring exercise helped identify cases of most common violations committed across Iraq and the Kurdistan Region which related to: death of workers, no or late payment of salaries, absence of work contract, abuse, threat and beating of workers, over time, prohibition of labor organisation, etc.

A roundtable was organized at the end of the project to discuss the baseline research and the outcome of the monitoring exercise and **addressed decision makers in an attempt to enhance the environment of workers and syndicates.**

In parallel, **a training of trainers for 24 members of syndicates** was organized to equip them with a better understanding of international standards and tools to defend workers' rights. Participants were asked to train the members of their syndicates.

Promoting Freedom of Association, Expression and Right to Information in Iraqi Kurdistan (August 2015 – December 2019 – NPA)

This project looked at **identifying the gaps existing in the laws and regulations related to freedom of association, expression and right to information as well as the shortcomings of the KRG in implementing the recommendations from the UPR process in 2014** related to Freedom of Expression. It also contributed to **building the capacity of key stakeholders, including governmental liaison officers, NGOs, journalists, and activists on the Access to Information Law** passed in 2013 by the KRG and the policy to implement the Right to Information law adopted in 2016.

PFO re-activated the Freedom of Association and Right to Information network by organizing a TOT and a series of training sessions. By-laws for the network were developed and agreed upon.

PFO further worked at merging its network with another rights and freedoms network established by PGN which gathered activists combating for rights and freedoms. The **Alliance of Rights and Freedoms** which emerged was instrumental in this project to conduct the surveys and the monitoring of violations.

PFO produced **3 baseline surveys that aimed to identify the gaps in the current legal framework of the following laws: Press Law, Demonstration Law and Right to Information Law.**

It further conducted **monitoring of violations occurring across Iraqi Kurdistan** through conducting 3 focus group discussions and visiting the Parliament, NGOs and journalists. A total of 127 violations were recorded during 2016.

A booklet gathering the baseline studies and the outcomes of the monitoring exercise was produced and distributed at the occasion of a **conference which gathered decision makers, NGOs and media outlets to discuss obstacles** existing to ensuring freedom of expression and right to information.

A close partnership was developed with the Independent Commission of Human Rights in Kurdistan as an MOU was signed to provide **capacity building to governmental liaison officers in regards to the Access to Information Law (11, 2013)** that was passed in 2013. 76 liaison officers were familiarized with the text in the governorates of Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymania.

Other capacity building trainings were organized for NGOs, media and government employees to discuss the Access to Information Law and the policy to implement the law passed in 2016 to ensure greater understanding and identify shortcomings in its implementation.

4 PARTICIPATING TO DEVELOPING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

Peace and Freedom is dedicated to become an active organization participating to developing a vibrant civil society. Besides the two programs it focuses on running, Peace and Freedom is determined to provide a significant contribution to the civil society and work towards the achievement of peace, freedoms, rights and social justice in Iraq.

Peace and Freedom believes that networking and collaboration is a key element in developing a democratic and peaceful society and is dedicated to provide support as needed to other organizations and groups that strive towards similar objectives.

Peace and Freedom also believes in the need to amplify the voice of civil society and to better document obstacles and challenges existing towards achieving a peaceful and democratic society. Thorough documentation of rights' violations, discriminations and other negative trends is essential to develop evidence and to further engage in fruitful dialogue with decision makers. Peace and Freedom also considers the importance to reflect on civil society experiences to develop lessons learned and improve strategies and impact of civil society initiatives.

4.1 KURDISTAN SOCIAL FORUM

Peace and Freedom Organization has been inspired by the experience of the World Social Forum in fighting for social justice. An Iraqi Social Forum was launched in 2013 by several Iraqi Civil Society Organizations and proved to be a positive experience gathering yearly numerous organizations to debate on key issues negatively impacting social justice in Iraq.

Peace and Freedom has developed the idea of the Kurdistan Social Forum and preparation work towards the organization of the first session was launched in 2016. Several meetings gathered civil society organizations working in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with workers' syndicates. Consultations to be held in the 4 governorates of the Kurdish Region will continue to be held throughout 2017 leading up to the organization of the Forum at the end of 2017.

<https://web.facebook.com/Kurdistan-Social-Forum-1403045843100609/>

4.2 PUBLICATIONS

Peace and Freedom is dedicated to publish reports and studies that produce evidence of challenges and obstacles facing the development of a democratic and peaceful society in Iraq.

It also recognizes the importance to enhance documentation and reflection over the initiatives it launches in order to contribute to learning and enhance its work strategies and impact.

Peace and Freedom has produced and published several reports:

- Reading of the new law “Protecting components in Kurdistan” passed by the KRG (2015)
- Notes and recommendations on the new law “Protecting components in Kurdistan” passed by the KRG (2015)
- Reality of youth from minority groups in Ninewa Governorate (2015)
- Realities of youth from minority groups in Kirkuk and Basra Governorates (2016)
- Case Study on demographic change occurring in Nahla, Dohuk Governorate (2016)
- Causes and Solutions to emigration of youth from Ninewa Governorate (2016)
- Conditions of workers’ rights and freedom of labor unions in Iraq and KRG (2016)
- Freedom of expression in Iraqi Kurdistan (2016)

4.3 SUPPORTING YOUTH GROUPS AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

Peace and Freedom believes in the energy of youth to make a change within their community and to spread within the society idealist visions of how to build a better future.

Peace and Freedom has been dedicated to supporting young people organizing themselves, developing their capacity and engaging in collaboration with youth groups which are closely connected to the community.

Peace and Freedom has developed specific connections with youth from Ninewa Governorate who have participated to and developed several initiatives providing emergency support to displaced communities as well as promoting dialogue and reconciliation among the diverse communities living in Ninewa. Peace and Freedom organized several events building the capacity of Ninewa Youth and has also supported the creation and the capacity building of Life Makers Organization, a youth organization composed of members from diverse communities from Ninewa, working on youth and peace issues. It also supports the youth advisory council to the Ninewa Governorate Council by providing capacity building and advice in engaging dialogue with the Ninewa authorities. Peace and Freedom has as well mobilized diverse youth groups from Ninewa to work on a common vision for the future of Ninewa and develop a strategic plan to promote peace and social cohesion in Ninewa.

5 DONORS AND MEMBERSHIPS

5.1 DONORS

PFO has collaborated with and received financial support from the following organizations:

- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
- UNDP
- Un Ponte Per (UPP)
- FHI360
- PAX

5.2 MEMBERSHIPS

- 1- Kurdistan Social Forum
- 2- Iraqi Transparency Alliance for Extractive Industries
- 3- Iraqi National Network for Social Protection
- 4- Ambassadors for freedom network

6 CAPACITY AND STRUCTURE

6.1 REGISTRATION

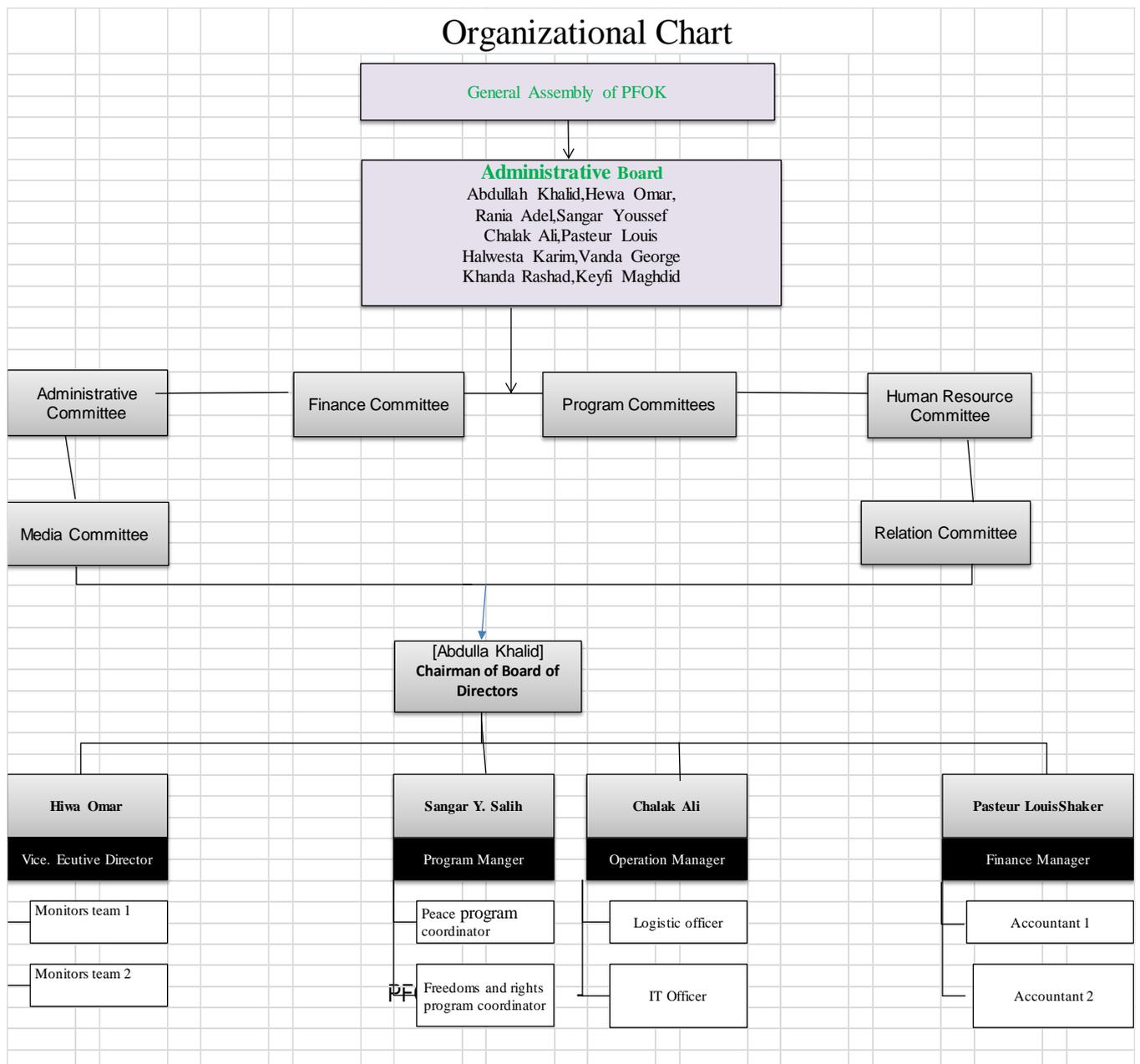
PFO was founded in 2013 and is registered in the Kurdistan Region within the Department of Non-Governmental Organizations. The registration number is 743 ك

6.2 EMPLOYEES

PFO currently employs 27 persons in order to implement its programs.

24% of employees are women.

6.3 STRUCTURE



7 CONTACT US

Address of the organization

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