SEEDS OF RECONCILIATION,
PLANTED WITH YOUR SUPPORT IN 2012
ANNUAL REPORT
Our vision of reconciliation is big. We see a new relationship between Iraqis and Americans: one of peace, friendship, and respect.

Dream Big
Join us at: ReconciliationProject.org/Get-Involved

Even with these successes, we have a long way to go. So we invite you to explore this report and join us. Together we can transform a legacy of violence into one of reconciliation. Together we can nurture and sustain the seeds of reconciliation. Together our seeds become a forest.

We dream big at the Iraqi and American Reconciliation Project. We dream about expanding friendship and mutual respect. Cultural understanding and appreciation. Professional ties and business relationships. In 2012 you helped our dreams start to come true. You helped us plant seeds of reconciliation:

- We facilitated the first American citizen delegation to Najaf, Iraq since before 2003.
- We provided clean water to 8,686 students in Iraq.
- We presented contemporary Iraqi art to thousands of individuals in Minnesota and the upper Midwest.
- We helped 11 Iraqi refugees and Iraqi-Americans tell their stories through their own books and videos.
- We supported Iraqi-American youth exchanges, including with Songs of Hope in St. Paul and the “Iraqi Young Leaders” program at the University of Minnesota.
- We honored peacemakers who have spoken out and acted for nonviolence, including Iraqi-American peacemaker Sami Rasouli.
- We welcomed several Sister City delegations from Najaf to Minneapolis.

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Kathleen McKay, Executive Director
Iraqi and American Reconciliation Project

Sami Rasouli, Executive Director
Muslim Peacemaker Teams (partner organization to IARP)
HIGHLIGHTS OF 2012

- Challenged stereotypes of Iraqi, Muslim, and Arab women by presenting the Not About Bombs art exhibition in Minneapolis, featuring the work of 5 contemporary Iraqi women artists.
- Provided clean drinking water to over 8,000 children in the area of Najaf, Iraq.
- Helped local Iraqi refugees and Iraqi-Americans in Minneapolis tell their stories through their own books and videos. The project was a collaboration with the Veterans Book Project, The Advocates for Human Rights, filmmaker Nathan Fisher, and Columbia Heights High School.
- Welcomed a delegation of government employees from Najaf for event management training and exchange with IARP and Meet Minneapolis.
- Hosted the President of the University of Kufa, Iraq for meetings and exchange at the University of Minnesota.
- Partnered with Target to host an arts and crafts area for children at the 2012 Minneapolis Sister Cities Celebration during the city’s Aquatennial week.
- Worked with medical students in Baghdad to exchange toys and art between children with cancer in Iraq and the United States.
- Hosted an event honoring Iraqi-American peacemaker Sami Rasouli with a celebration of his life and work at Crescent Moon Banquet Hall in Minneapolis.
- Organized the first citizen delegation to Najaf, Iraq since before 2003. The Sister City delegation from Minneapolis brought a message of friendship and strengthened ties between citizens of the two cities.

View Iraqi artwork on our program website: IraqiArtProject.org
I was a journalist in Iraq. One morning, on my way to work, around 7 a.m., I noticed that three men were following me. They stopped to ask me for directions. I bent down to give them directions and they put a gun to my head, telling me to get in their car...

"After I got into their car, one of them hit me on the top of the head with the gun. I immediately lost consciousness."

I was released a month later.

I suffered a lot, but it was little compared to what some of my journalist colleagues went through. Some were killed.

One of my very close friends was shot in the head by a sniper while we were reporting together. He was standing only a few feet away from me. Our expression is, 'He died in between my arms.'

He had seven kids.

For a few years I moved back and forth between Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. After that, I settled in Syria and called my family so that they could come live with me. Then I applied to the United Nations for refugee status.

It's calm in America, but I would like to learn the language and be able to communicate with other parties... I want to provide my kids with a better standard of living so that they can live a prosperous life. In my country, I can work in my job and provide a better life, but there is no safety. Here, I cannot work in my field.

When I first came here I understood that this was not a vastly different society. This was not the first time that I've traveled. People are kind here, and I like Minnesota. Even so.

If there were safety in my country, I would go back right away.

Ahmed’s book and other books created by Iraqis in collaboration with IARP through Veterans Book Project workshops are available on our program website, IraqiArtProject.org/Bookmaking-and-Videomaking.
A collection of contemporary works by eminent female Iraqi artists explores an identity in flux.

This is contemporary art by Iraqi women, presented by you in an attempt to deliberately explore and challenge expectations.

IARP’s “Not About Bombs” exhibit addresses how a female perspective can fit into the context of turmoil and conflict through art and avoid falling into the typical ways that women are represented... and misrepresented.

You are helping Iraqi women tell their story in whichever form they desire. Here they tell it through art that speaks an unconventional language. Here is a platform for a generation of female artists who are undeniably influenced by the aesthetics of conflict, but not in the least bit limited by them.

The 5 Iraqi women in this exhibit contribute art that is visually and conceptually accomplished, as well as unpredictable and emotionally engaging.

Curated by Tricia Khutoretsky, “Not About Bombs” explores what Iraqi women are feeling and thinking. It is showing in 2013 at the National Veterans Art Museum. In 2012 you helped us challenge stereotypes through art in Minneapolis. Now you are helping us do it in Chicago.
Mohammed became an aircraft engineer and dreamed of raising his own family in Iraq. But because he built furniture for U.S. military offices after 2003, he was threatened and forced to flee his home and country. Today he lives in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

You are helping young children in the United States learn about why Mohammed had to leave his home and seek safety somewhere else. With your support IARP developed a curriculum in 2012 with The Advocates for Human Rights around books and videos by Iraqi refugees living in Minnesota, also created with your support. You are helping American children learn empathy and gain an awareness of their brothers and sisters in Iraq. You are helping the next generation depart to peace.

Voices of Iraqi Refugees

Lesson Plans:
Making a Connection Grades K-4
Visualizing Iraq Grades 5-8
Iraqi Voices Grades 9-12

These lessons are a joint project of The Advocates for Human Rights, the Iraqi American Reconciliation Project, and independent artists, Nathan Fisher and Monica Haller.

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Receive emails from IARP directly in your inbox by signing up at: ReconciliationProject.org

IraqiArtProject.org/Iraqi-Futures

from us with love

Harmony of Civilizations

“This project marks the beginning to create a more hopeful tomorrow. I want my people to bury the past and start over. I seek to remove the clash of civilizations from the dictionary of our lives. I seek to build a future that is based on our hopes rather than our fears and apprehensions.”

- Supporter in Baghdad

IraqiArtProject.org/Bookmaking-and-Videomaking

DEPARTURE TO PEACE

Mohammed grew up in Baghdad, Iraq. He says, “I woke up to the world with a nice family: a very good, hard working father; an incredible, hard working mother; a beautiful younger sister; and a smart little brother.”

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It was just one example of rebuilding and optimism we found in Najaf.
The fact that these were 20-30 year old professionals who have overseen the planting of almost 20,000 seedlings over the past year was especially impressive and inspiring.
The tea distribution at meetings and in private homes is a fitting representation of the open armed welcome we received in Najaf. Graciousness and generosity marked every transaction, be it repeated offers of help with hijabs or lush tables with multiple choices of breads, fruits, meats and vegetables, the welcome never waned.

In personal conversations we heard about husbands taken for the Iran-Iraq war never to return, of women who were imprisoned by Saddam Hussein for political activism, and of course about being occupied by the US and left with toxic waste and much higher cancer rates. With this multi-generational grief and anger just below the surface, our hosts still smiled and exuded excitement and enthusiasm about our having come to visit.

The seven of us came away overwhelmed with how richly gifted we were, both by Najafis we had known and those we had just met. We have been forever changed and our commitment to ongoing exchanges with our Sister City is solid.
For American peacemakers, we risk getting identified with ‘Muslims,’ ‘terrorists,’ and the ‘other.’ Only as we reach out and offer the olive branch to each other, to look across the table and see the other as our sister, our brother can that healing salve of reconciliation be allowed to help relieve the festering boil of resentment and retaliation.

It had been a long day, but in those brief minutes, with those heartfelt words, I/we were revived.

Sami said in his translation, ‘His heart is full of love and he just keeps repeating how glad he is to be here with you.’ This is what the Iraqi and American Reconciliation Project is all about: getting on with the business of healing peoples whose heart has been broken and now want to be whole again. Thank you Hussein for opening your heart to us. May we always be ready to reciprocate in kind.”

“Before you came here, the US was known as the #1 killer of Iraqis. But you came in peace. You have done the most difficult thing in taking the time and effort to visit Najaf, the Shrines of Ali and Hussein, and nearby Babylon. We see that you come as friends. Children and adults (here in Najaf see a new face of Americans. You came and provided water filters under Water For Peace, you sent letters to schoolchildren. This is reconciliation.’

Joan leaned over the table to have better eye contact with our host. ‘Actually you, with your words to us have initiated this reconciliation with us. And we are so very grateful for your kind words.’

All of us in the delegation are acutely aware of how dangerous this reconciling work can be—for both sides. For Iraqis, they risk being seen as collaborators with the nation whose ‘Shock and Awe’ campaign was designed to force an immediate cowering surrender.

Our host stood up as Sami translated. The first words were quite shocking to me: ‘Before you came here, the US was known as the #1 killer of Iraqis. But you came in peace. You have done the most difficult thing in taking the time and effort to visit Najaf, the Shrines of Ali and Hussein, and nearby Babylon. We see that you come as friends. Children and adults (here in Najaf see a new face of Americans. You came and provided water filters under Water For Peace, you sent letters to schoolchildren. This is reconciliation.’

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You helped us welcome a delegation of government employees from Najaf to Minneapolis in February. The delegation received training on large event management through Meet Minneapolis, IARP, and partners. The five delegates met with over 25 government officials and staff from the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis convention and hospitality community. Training and exchange topics included event and festival management, large scale event planning, convention and visitor bureau services, convention center operations, and visitor protocol. You helped Iraqis and Americans trade notes on hospitality.

In addition, the Iraqi delegates had the opportunity to interact with many American civilians. One night, volunteers Elise and James Roberts hosted the group at their home. Nazar, one of the delegates, later said, "I never thought I would be in the home of an American. When we drove up to the house, she was expectantly watching for us at her front window. She seemed so excited to have us at her home."

Meet Minneapolis has been a strong partner since the start of the Minneapolis - Najaf Sister City relationship in 2009. We are excited to work with them and you on many future home stays in the United States and Iraq.

"Ten Marches have come and gone. The war has significantly ended... But no turning of the seasons can diminish the pain and the loss of the years of war. No passage of time and no dark skies can ever dull the meaning of the war moment. The US rising generation who witnessed war have been called the 9-11 generation and we in Iraq called ourselves "intelligence mistake" "stay the course" and sometimes “Mission Accomplished” generation.

War has promised us tragedy. War has solved no problem. Apart from that, I write these words firm in my belief, that we both as Iraqis and Americans are more hopeful than ever with the US military withdrawal. The dark chapter of war has ended. But now, we seek to see the US brighter face. We need a brighter chapter to unfold before us."

- Iraqi supporter

TRADING NOTES ON HOSPITALITY
Send a letter for peace
You and your group can send letters to Iraqis about your hopes, dreams, and common humanity.
ReconciliationProject.org/Letters-for-Peace

Raise funds, raise hope
Start your own fundraising page for clean water for children in Iraq, or raise funds for another project supporting reconciliation.
GiveMN.org/iarp-project

You helped us partner with Songs of Hope in St. Paul, Minnesota to bring the first-ever Iraqi participants to the 6-week performing arts summer camp.

Songs of Hope is an international performance group of youth, ages 10 to 22, from around the world. The performers wear their native, traditional dress while singing songs and dancing to Motown, rock, blues, world and folk music.

Songs of Hope co-founder Jeanne Junge said, “With young artists from Vietnam, Russia, China and Iraq coming this summer, Songs of Hope will have a lot of children from former enemies of the United States on stage, making music together, enjoying themselves, and we hope – inspiring their audiences to think thoughts of peace.”

Sister Cities Day: IARP partnered with Target to host arts and crafts activities for children at the 2012 Minneapolis Sister Cities Celebration in July. Activities included face-painting and making necklaces, comic books, or cards for kids with cancer in Iraq.

Singing for hope

Photo courtesy of Songs of Hope
Imagine not being able to drink a glass of water without fearing sickness...

In 2012, you helped ensure that 8,686 Iraqi kids don’t have to. That’s a life-saving step in the right direction.

Iraq’s water situation is rated the 5th worst in the world. Water-borne diseases such as diarrhea remain big killers of children under 5.

Through Water for Peace, IARP and our partner in Iraq, the Muslim Peacemaker Teams, oversee the installation of clean water filtration systems at schools in the area of Najaf, Iraq. These systems are funded entirely through your generosity.

Learn more about how to join us in bringing clean water and message of peace at:

WaterForPeace.org
or by contacting us at info@reconciliationproject.org

Water for Peace provides clean water to Iraqi children. In 2012 you helped us provide clean drinking water to 8,686 children in the area of Najaf, Iraq. Overall we have provided clean water to 84 schools and over 43,000 children in Iraq.

WaterForPeaceProject.org

You can give the life-saving gift of clean water online at:

GiveMN.org/Water-for-Peace
We are deeply grateful for all of our donors. If your name has been misspelled, displayed incorrectly, or inadvertently omitted, please accept our apologies and let us know.

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* denotes in-kind donation

YOU HELPED US STRETCH EVERY DOLLAR IN 2012 TO PLANT AND GROW SEEDS OF RECONCILIATION

Revenue:
Individual Gifts
Foundations
Government Grants
Total:
$41,042
$18,500
$27,063
$86,605

Expenses:
Programming
Water / Muslim Peacemaker Teams
General and Administration
Total:
$44,850
$21,600
$10,800
$87,250

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Sustain our work and help seeds of reconciliation grow into a more peaceful world at:
ReconciliationProject.org/Donate

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www.ReconciliationProject.org

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