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Hewlêr



UKH Alumni
Association

UKH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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HANAR MAROUF

Political Officer at British Consulate General

The colour pink covered my thesis defence's presentation, a masculine topic (some might argue) discussing Iran's involvement in Iraq since 2003 with a colour recognised to be women's favourite. My objective was to show that we can also be part at

perhaps has pushed me to come out stronger. Yet this was a hell of an experience.

At times, I could no longer see the end of the tunnel. I doubted myself. I lost confidence. I questioned my capabilities. But I was never ready to quit.

Despite a hectic full-time job as a political officer at the British Consulate in Erbil with having around 40 hours per week where at times I found myself too overwhelmed with assignments to focus on anything but academic, I found the space. I re-furnished a room in my apartment to accommodate/force myself to stay put for 16-20 hours per weekend. With the gradual deep-seated academic anxiety, I had the sweetest and most intelligent supervisor whose guidance made the process clearer, Dr. Mohammed Bapir.

I also didn't jeopardize my health and resisted back with catching the gym at 06:30 every morning to support my mental health.

Being active in my career and academic life have taught me a lot. Women and Politics unfortunately don't match much in our societies, but we are here to change that! So far, I am the only female graduate at UKH holding a PhD, which could motivate many others to take this path if they want to.

I never believed in 'impossible'. Out of four PhD candidates of my year's cohort (three very respectful, smart, and encouraging male colleagues and myself), only I graduated in 2023. Resistance and dedication are key to flipping dreams. Neither success nor failure are final destinations, the courage to face them and the continuity are what matters.

It feels like the end now, but it is just the beginning of an exciting new chapter.



the table, speak, debate, challenge, and argue in topics that for years identified to be for men – similar to the colour pink that not necessarily is all women's favourite.

24 years of studying, with only one year gap in between, did teach me a lot. Out of the long years, seven of them were at UKH. My studies at UKH had good and challenging moments. I had the chance to get to know many amazing people, have a clear and robust curriculum teaching me all what it takes to know on international relations and world politics. However, university never comes without challenges. Being one of the very first students studying PhD was not easy, but when there is discipline, there is always away to make it right.

I resembled the journey to be like my master's degree, smooth, fast, and clear. But obviously, I was very mistaken. I have gone through a lot in life – like many indeed. Every single challenge

HALO MOHAMMED HAMAKARIM

Project Coordinator at Rwanda Foundation for Development

I am Halo Mohammed Hamakarim, and my professional journey began at the University of Kurdistan Hewler (UKH) as part of the class of 2016. Graduating from the Faculty of Natural Resources with a degree in petroleum engineering, I envisioned a future in the oil and gas industry, but my path took an unexpected turn. The impact of UKH on my journey has been profound; despite the challenging environment and limited opportunities for petroleum engineering graduates at that time, my education at UKH provided me with the skills, knowledge, and adaptability to navigate uncharted waters. Unfortunately, our graduation time was far from ideal for pursuing job opportunities in the oil and gas sector. The ongoing war against ISIS and the withdrawal of oil companies from the region left very limited openings at that time. As a fresh graduate, I faced the challenge of not having the opportunity to work in the field I had prepared for. However, rather than being disheartened, I chose to embrace the opportunities at hand and felt like it is a national obligation for all to fight terrorism and participate in the national and governmental attempts for supporting and creating a safe space for the displaced influxes. The humanitarian response sector presented itself as a path forward in this regard, despite the stark contrast to my educational background. With dedication and a commitment to learning, I excelled in this field. Since graduation, I have had the privilege of working with multiple national and international non-governmental humanitarian organizations. Through hard work, I acquired managerial positions within these organizations, contributing significantly to various humanitarian field focuses such as emergency response, education, livelihood, protection, shelter, and development. I had the privilege to support



the newly displaced influxes during the liberation of Mosul and played a vital role in the development of local systems through all the program interventions carried out by our teams. What's crucial to highlight is that your educational background and professional life do not need to be perfectly matched for success. Success comes from taking initiatives and the hard work of consistently developing and updating the skills required for the job market. My journey from UKH to a successful career in humanitarian response is a testament to the power of adaptability, continuous learning, and the impact of a quality education. It's a reminder that success can be achieved in diverse fields when one is dedicated and willing to evolve. I encourage current and future students to embrace opportunities and never shy away from challenges, as it's often in adversity that our true potential is realized.

TAWAR QADERI

Communication and Public Relations Advisor



Growing up in a Kurdish society, I was expected, I, like every other student who excelled, was expected to become a doctor or an engineer. However, deep down, my heart was set on a different path. I wanted to be a storyteller and a communicator. I did what I had to do and joined the engineering school in UKH in 2010. I made a decent effort to make it work, but it became clear that this wasn't what I wanted to do and I graduated with no interest in pursuing a career in the engineering industry."

When I graduated, I decided to take another direction and follow the world of communication and effective storytelling. It was dur-

ing this phase of my life that I realized the significance of being a UKH alumna. UKH supported my self-discovery and personal growth beyond academic expertise.

Upon graduation, I joined UNICEF, where my dream of writing and sharing inspiring stories became a reality. I worked as a storyteller and had the privilege of meeting very inspirational characters along the way that gave so much meaning to my work. I discovered that the way we tell a story makes a difference. Facts remain the same, story changes and behavior as well. Therefore, I decided to make a difference in this field.

I have now spent almost 9 years designing, planning, and implementing different cutting-edge communication strategies for international development agencies, companies, and government institutions, with a strong focus on gender, governance, peacebuilding, and climate change. In between I also obtained a few international and academic degrees in different universities and agencies in Kurdistan, USA, and Germany. One of them is an executive master's degree with honor in business administration from UKH in 2019 which I will always be proud of.

I deeply admire UKH for its mission, success, and commitment to providing quality education in our region. Each day, I am dedicated to learning and developing my skills and with every achievement, I fondly recall how UKH played a crucial role in shaping my abilities and empowering me to go beyond what is there for me. I am a proud and dedicated UKH alumna.



UNIVERSITY OF KURDISTAN HEWLÊR PARTNERS WITH MONTANUNIVERSITÄT LEOBEN, AUSTRIA

A delegation from UKH visited Montanuniversität Leoben, Austria, to develop academic partnerships in the field of Petroleum Engineering. Montanuniversität Leoben is one of Europe's leading universities, specializing in metallurgy and materials, mining, geological sciences, and petroleum engineering. The first group of UKH Petroleum Engineering students will arrive in Leoben in January to spend one semester at the University. Speaking of the partnership, UKH President, Professor Keith Sharp said: "We are delighted to be partnering with such a prestigious specialist university in the field of Petroleum Engineering. This is a fantastic opportunity for UKH students to experience studying at one of the leading universities in Europe. We had some very fruitful discussions with the team at Montana University and as a result are working on some exciting joint projects including the development of dual master's programmes and the delivery of specialist short courses for the oil and gas sector."

UKH has been diligently working towards enhancing its global presence to provide its students with extensive opportunities. "We are delighted to announce that we have taken a significant stride towards internationalization, and we are confident that our students will reap the rewards of this endeavor. We are actively exploring the possibility of collaborating with Montanuniversität Leoben, Austria to offer a dual master's degree program, which would mark a significant milestone in our journey towards internationalization and elevate our university to an even higher global standing." UKH Vice President, Prof. Dr. Dana Mawlood stated.

UKH ACADEMIC STAFF ACHIEVE ADVANCE HE FELLOWSHIP CERTIFICATE

As part of its strategic plan in furthering quality, standards, and international benchmarking, in 2022, UKH signed an agreement with Higher Education Academy in the UK for teaching and learning quality. Throughout the last year, UKH has supported a large number of academic staff to enhance their teaching methods and strategies, ensuring they remain current with evolving global developments and innovative methods of teaching and learning. After a thorough application and assessment process and as a result, around 16 academic staff members were awarded the status of fellowship of Higher Education Academy for different categories of Associate Fellowship, Fellowship, Senior Fellowship, and Principal Fellowship. The award of the fellowship of the Higher Education Academy demonstrates that the candidates have reached the high standards for university teaching set out in the UK's professional standards framework.

Advance HE is a member-led charity of and for the sector that works with partners across the globe to improve higher education for staff, students, and society. They help higher education organizations be the best they can be by unlocking the potential of their people.

This agreement is set to remain active and open to all academic staff for further standardizing teaching and learning.





DASTAN HAMAKAREEM

**Design, Monitoring, Evaluation,
and Learning Manager at Search
for Common Ground**

My name is Dastan Hamakareem. I am proud to share that I am a two-time graduate of the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH). I earned my undergraduate degree in Mineral Resources Engineering in 2016 and later an Executive Master in Business Management in 2021.

Gaining admission to UKH was no easy feat. The application process was, and I believe remains, highly competitive. This assertion rings particularly true as I recently mentored my younger brother in his own bid to join and study at the UKH.

The moment I received my acceptance letter from UKH remains vividly etched in my memory as one of the most exhilarating of my life. Throughout my academic journey, I forged bonds with incredible peers, lecturers, and faculty. Despite pursuing a degree in one field and transitioning to a seemingly unrelated professional arena after graduation, I firmly attribute my professional successes to the foundational skills and knowledge I acquired at UKH. This education rendered me a top contender in numerous job applications post-graduation.

Over the past seven years, I have been deeply committed to the humanitarian and development sectors. I have had the privilege of working with globally renowned humanitarian organizations such as International Medical Corps and Save the Children International.

During my tenure with these organizations, I had the opportunity to collaborate with fellow alumni from UKH who held pivotal roles not only in Kurdistan but also throughout Iraq. Currently, I hold the position of Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Manager at Search for Common Ground, the world's foremost organization dedicated to peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

My education at UKH not only shaped my professional trajectory but also set me on a path to further academic achievements. In 2021, I was honored to be selected as a Chevening Scholar, one of the world's most prestigious scholarships. This enabled me to pursue a master's degree in Violence, Conflict, and Development at SOAS University of London, globally renowned and ranked second in development studies.

In conclusion, I would emphasize that UKH offers more than just an education. It provides a repertoire of resources for mastery in any chosen field. It remains incumbent upon the student to harness these resources astutely, perpetually refining skills to meet the ever-evolving demands of the global workspace. And amidst all this, never forget to cherish and enjoy every moment of your time at UKH.

BLEND KURDO

Chief of Staff at ZOM Diary

It is truly remarkable how swiftly progress can be achieved when one establishes themselves in an environment where their contributions hold significance. As Jordan Peterson aptly stated, ‘assuming that you are around people to whom proving yourself useful actually matters.’ The University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH) was precisely such a place for me, where my actions held weight, and embarking on an educational endeavor there felt like navigating uncharted waters that demanded taking a bold leap.

My journey began in the summer of 2011 when I received a message. Living in a remote village with a weak mobile signal, I had placed my phone at the highest point in my room to ensure connectivity. As I opened the message, I discovered that I was about to embark on a life-altering adventure, one that would reshape my self-perception and my understanding of the world. I was accepted into the Access to Higher Education program, subsequently pursued a degree in Water Resources Engineering, and most recently completed an EMBA.

Recently, I transitioned from my role as Head of Business Development at Tiller Consultancy to Zom Diary, as Chief of Staff, a project that stands as a cornerstone of our national initiatives. Zom Diary is dedicated to driving economic growth in Kurdistan and creating valuable job opportunities within Kurdistan’s market. I am enthusiastic about assuming a pivotal role in propelling this project to success and becoming an integral part of this remarkable milestone.

Wherever you encounter a UKH alumnus, you find a commitment to excellence and a vision for a brighter future. UKH has played a crucial role in nurturing top-tier talent and fostering an environment condu-

cive to the growth of future leaders. It is crucial to underscore how the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH) plays an instrumental role in shaping market leaders. The evidence for this assertion is abundant and compelling; a significant proportion of professionals in the Kurdistan job market are graduates of UKH. This fact attests to the university’s profound impact on the region’s workforce and economic landscape.



The success stories of UKH alumni are a testament to the university’s role in creating market leaders. Graduates from UKH have gone on to hold influential positions in both the public and private sectors. They have made significant contributions to various industries, including business, engineering, healthcare, and education. Their impact extends far beyond the walls of the university, positively affecting the economic growth and development of the Kurdistan region.

In essence, UKH serves as a crucible for future leaders and professionals, molding individuals who not only excel in their careers but also contribute to the overall prosperity of Kurdistan. The university’s alumni network is a living testament to the transformative power of UKH’s education, and it stands as a testament to the institution’s commitment to creating market leaders who drive the region towards a brighter and more prosperous future.

ZAINAB A. YASEEN

The Head of HR Department at Hawkary
Pharmaceuticals Company



I am Zainab Yaseen, I wanted to share my success story as a proud Alumna of UKH, where I completed both my BSc’s and master’s degrees in business management. When I decided to study at UKH in 2011, my goal wasn’t originally to study Business Management, let alone specialize in “Public Sector Management.” until I had the chance to meet with Dr. Heja Sindi, a dedicated and inspiring professor who completely transformed my perspective and career path. Dr. Heja’s mentorship and guidance led me to the exploration of the field of Management, and it’s a decision I am eternally grateful for, as it has shaped my future in profound ways. UKH did not only provide me with an excellent education but also opened doors to

countless opportunities that have shaped my career and personal growth. UKH’s reputation as a top educational institution, providing its graduates with remarkable opportunities. The reputation of UKH has been a priceless asset in my professional journey. After completing my BSc’s degree at UKH, I wasted no time in embarking on my career journey. Within just three weeks of my graduation in 2016, I joined the professional world by working in the HR department as an HR Officer. Over the course of the next year, I recognized the vast array of opportunities within my chosen field. Throughout my life, I’ve been driven to create positive change and impact the lives of those around me, and the HR field offers an ideal platform for achieving these goals. Driven by my passion for effecting change, I decided to pursue a master’s degree, leading me to my MBA. This educational journey allowed me to gain the knowledge and skills needed to make transformative contributions to the HR field. With the unwavering support of my current employer, who entrusted me with the authority to implement what I had learned, I began making tangible changes within my organization. I am incredibly proud of my career progression, now I am the Head of the HR Department for a prestigious group of companies managing over 1000 employees within a challenging and dynamic environment. Being a female leader in such a role has been particularly empowering. Continuing my goal, to promote awareness and guide all levels of the organization through changes, forward-thinking, altering the public’s perception of the field. and being ahead of the curve. I am grateful for the opportunities that my employer has afforded me. I want to express my gratitude to my family, the faculty, and friends who made my educational journey so memorable. I will forever cherish the memories and the knowledge gained during my time at UKH.

AHMED KURDO SWAR

Assistant Lecturer at Catholic University

“My journey began at the University of Kurdistan-Hawler (UKH), where those years shaped my academic interests and ignited my passion for politics and international relations.

In 2018, I proudly graduated from UKH with a Bachelor’s degree in Politics and International Relations. This was a significant milestone in my education, providing me with a deeper understanding of global affairs and diplomacy.

Currently, I am a PhD student at Soran University, fully immersed in the world of academia, and I’m pursuing my research interests in the ever-evolving nature of politics and international relations.

Beyond my studies, I serve as an assistant lecturer at Catholic University, where I have the privilege of guiding and nurturing the intellectual growth of the next generation of scholars. It’s a role I take great pride in, and it allows me to share the knowledge and insights I’ve gained on my academic journey.

My story is more than just an academic pursuit. It’s a tale of international exchange and cultural enrichment. It was all be-

cause of UKH that I was chosen to represent my university in France as part of a student exchange program. This opportunity allowed me to expand my academic horizons, experience a different culture, forge lifelong friendships, and truly appreciate the value of global connections.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the University of Kurdistan-Hawler. It is here where my educational journey began, and the seeds of knowledge were sown. Without the unwavering support, guidance, and quality education provided by UKH, I would not be where I am today. The university has played a pivotal role in shaping my academic and personal growth, and I will forever be grateful for the opportunities it has provided. My journey, from UKH to Soran University and beyond, is one marked by determination, perseverance, and an unwavering passion for politics and international relations. I am profoundly thankful to my alma mater, the University of Kurdistan-Hawler, and I hope my story serves as a testament to the synergy of education, international experiences, and gratitude.”

