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UKH Alumni
Association

UKH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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MAHMOOD SIDIQ

Research Fellow at Rudaw
Research Center

I am Mahmood Sidiq Mahmood, known as Mahmood Baban. My life took a transformative turn when I decided to depart from my conventional university in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and enroll at the University of Kurdistan Hawler (UKH) to pursue studies in English. As time unfolded, I discovered the profound impact this decision had on my entire life journey. I successfully completed my BSc with honors and continued my academic pursuit with an EMBA and MA in oil and gas management, earning academic excellence awards along the way.

During my time at the English language medium university, I realized the possibility of balancing work and study. Volunteering to assist Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from 2013 to 2015 became a pivotal experience, leading to my initial employment in various international organizations such as DRC, ACTED, INTERSOS, and NRC, where I served as a WASH engineer and distribution and education officer. Subsequently, I transitioned to Rudaw Media Network, holding positions as the assistant to the planning department and a journalist. Currently, I serve as a research fellow at Rudaw Research Center, focusing on analytical writing, research, reports, translation, and book contributions in the fields of energy, economy, and the environment.

In the summer of 2022 in London, I achieved two certificates at LSE:

one for public policy analysis and environmental economics and another for sustainable development. These experiences have deepened my understanding of critical issues and improved my analytical skills, contributing to my vision of a more prosperous world.

I hold esteemed positions as the UNITE2030 ambassador in Iraq and the UNIFY National Focal Point for Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, representing two prominent global youth organizations dedicated to advancing the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In September 2022, in New York, I was selected as one of the 200 participants from a pool of 3000 applicants. Working in a team of 40, we developed a solution for SDG8 economic growth and decent work, winning the Sub Solution Hub for our proposal addressing the challenges faced by the BIOPAC community in Canada, excluded by a hiring algorithm.

Recently, I received acceptance to represent Iraq and the Kurdistan Region as a delegate at the Middle East Youth Summit 2024. Following my participation in different local and international forums, conferences, and most recently, the Doha Forum 2023, I express my deep appreciation and gratitude to UKH for the unwavering support provided, despite any other concerns I may have encountered.

LELAV SAMIR

Greenfield Marketing Manager at Asiacell Company

I felt disheartened upon completing high school, having not attained high grades to pursue my dream of becoming a doctor. At that time, the suggestion of attending UKH, a university renowned for shaping students' futures, was proposed to my family and me. Fortunately, I passed all the exams and gained acceptance.



Reflecting on my initial week at UKH in 2007, the university equipped me with skills beyond my academic pursuits—presentations, seminars, proficient English, and various other competencies. These attributes have made every UKH graduate distinguishable and sought after graduation in various companies and organizations. It's important to note that UKH played a pivotal role in enabling me to access the incredible experience of the IYLEP program in 2008, which opened my eyes to a different facet of youth empowerment within the community. This experience significantly bolstered my self-confidence, networking abilities, and the exploration of personal skills beyond formal education.

I haven't encountered a UKH alum who hasn't flourished in their career or secured a commendable job. Beginning with part-time work during my studies, the foundational skills from UKH facilitated this opportunity, and a few months before graduating, a job fair at UKH presented me with an excellent offer from an international retail company, marking the inception of my career in marketing. Through unwavering dedication, I steadily ascended the professional ladder, exploring different dimensions within my field. I unearthed latent strengths and honed skills previously unknown to me.

Although my bachelor's degree is in IT, the diverse skills acquired from UKH opened doors to alternative career paths. Consequently, I pursued a master's degree in business administration in 2015. Over the past 13 years in marketing management, I progressed towards managerial roles, spearheading numerous projects and programs. In my professional journey, I've consistently played an active role, contributing to numerous initiatives and strategic projects aimed at enhancing the economic landscape in the region. From organizing festivals that showcase local products to advocating for and supporting local farmers through various

media programs while working in retail. Additionally, I've dedicated efforts to empower local employees in international settings, emphasized the localization of marketing campaigns, and engaged in many public speaking to empower women and youth within the private sector over the last decade.

Since 2021, my career has transitioned from retail to telecom, exposing me to the ever-evolving marketing landscape and digitalization driven by cutting-edge technology.

UKH remains the bedrock where I cultivated both myself and my career. I'll forever be a proud UKHian, grateful for the foundation and opportunities it provided.

NWEKAR NAJMALDIN

CEO of Nwekar Auto for Automotive Trading

In 2018, fresh out of the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH), I took a leap into entrepreneurship, setting up my own car dealership. Thanks to a solid education in marketing, management, and economics, I felt ready for the automotive industry's challenges. Before this venture, I'd worked in American and Japanese companies, gaining insights into different industry sectors.

Applying what I learned at UKH, I strategically positioned my dealership in the local market. The management skills I picked up helped me run day-to-day operations smoothly, optimize processes, and ensure customers had a great experience. Economic insights guided my pricing strategies and financial decisions, leading to the growth and sustainability of my business.

Then came the curveball of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, hitting my small showroom just as I was getting started. Despite the setbacks, I bounced back using the problem-solving skills I honed during my education. Fast forward three years, and I'm not just back on my feet, I'm now the official distributor of Mitsubishi in Kurdistan.

This success story isn't just about me; it's an invitation to current and former UKH students to check out our showrooms. Here, you can see firsthand how applying what you learn in school can turn challenges into opportunities. My journey is proof that with determination and the right skills, you can turn your vision into a success story. So, come visit, and let's inspire the next generation of go-getters together!





NEWS

UKH SIGNS MOU WITH KII

On the 20th of December 2023, the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Kurdistan Innovation Institute (KII), outlining a wide range of cooperation themes in the field of innovation.

The KII delegation, led by Dr. Sarbaz N. Othman, Deputy Chair of the Board of Directors, and Co-CEO of KII, was warmly welcomed by UKH President Prof. Dr. Keith Sharp, Vice President Prof. Dr. Dana Mawlood, and Dean of External Engagement and Research Dr. Bayar Mustafa.

This MOU is part of UKH's domestic and international outreach and engagement with local and international bodies to promote and endorse innovation, artificial intelligence, and other related fields.



The partnership primarily focuses on the topics of climate change, environmental studies, and entrepreneurship. It establishes the framework for a sustainable collaborative plan between both sides.

This agreement results from shared goals and a vision for contributing to global issues, particularly addressing different fields and challenges related to climate change, water resources management, and nature-based solutions. It is another steppingstone to promote a worldwide perspective on education and research and to further internationalize their outreach efforts.

The agreement presents an opportunity for UKH to create and enhance new programs and to work towards promoting a shared transfer of knowledge and skills. This includes the development of dual PhD and other postgraduate programs. Both institutions plan to encourage learning by initiating visiting professor programs, allowing scholars to exchange ideas and knowledge.

Both sides also agreed to host PhD students to enhance the research experience and promote cultural exchange.

UKH sees BTU as a long-term partner and a gateway to the EU. This agreement marks a significant advance in the collaboration between UKH and BTU in the field of science. Both schools are eager to initiate new projects and anticipate positive results from our partnership, which is set to enhance the academic settings of both universities.



UKH & BTU COLLABORATION AGREEMENT ON ACADEMIC, RESEARCH EXCHANGE

A UKH delegation, consisting of Prof. Keith Sharp, UKH President; Dr. Bayar Mustafa Sêvdeen, Dean of Research and External Engagement; and Mahnaz Lashkri, Strategic Projects and Partnerships Manager, met with Brandenburg University of Technology (BTU) President, Prof. Dr. Gesine Grande; Prof. Dr. Eike Albrecht, Chair of Public Law; and Steven Kramm, Academic Employee in the Chair of Environment, to discuss and sign the agreement.

ASHTI TAIMOUR

Project Manager for an Agro-Tourism in Hawraman

I am Ashti Taimour Ghafour, a graduate of the Faculty of Natural Resources with a specialization in Petroleum Engineering from the University of Kurdistan, Hawler (UKH). My academic journey began in 2010, and upon entering Kurdistan University, my initial expectations were similar to any university within the Kurdistan Region. I anticipated a routine of attending classes, taking exams, and participating in graduation ceremonies—a conventional university experience. However, my tenure at UKH transcended these assumptions. UKH proved to be transformative by offering more than technical education. It cultivated language proficiency, fortified foundational knowledge, and enhanced confidence, teamwork, communication, planning, and leadership skills.

During my tenure as a student at the University of Kurdistan, Hawler (UKH), I concurrently engaged in professional endeavors with Rudaw Multimedia Company, cultivating a profound affinity for storytelling, reporting, and news gathering. Despite the discernible dichotomy between my academic pursuits and vocational interests, upon the culmination of my university education, a definitive predilection for a career in media and reporting emerged, diverging from the conventional trajectory of a petroleum engineer. This realization prompted me to embark upon an unconventional professional journey. The robust educational foundation acquired at UKH played a pivotal role in shaping my decision to embrace this alternative path. The resultant success not only underscored my adaptability but also served as a source of inspiration for others, encouraging them to explore their passions beyond the confines of traditional career trajectories.

After graduating, I commenced a four-year tenure as a member of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Coordinator for International Advocacy Office. Throughout this period, my responsibilities included reporting, editing reports, conducting research, organizing conferences and meetings, liaising with media, UN agencies, and Consulate Generals in Erbil. Additionally, I focused on human rights and the plight of displaced people and compiling data on ISIS crimes.



Following changes in my living circumstances, I concluded my previous role and relocated to Sulaimani. I then joined Halabja Group of Companies, a prominent entity in the city. During a three-year tenure, I played a key role in the Commercial Department, focusing on sales and marketing, as well as conducting research and working on digital media initiatives.

Currently, I hold the position of Manager for an agro-tourism project in Hawraman, actively overseeing its initial stages of construction and development. This distinctive project stands out among tourism destinations in Iraq due to its unique nature. The endeavor presents an extraordinary and unforgettable professional opportunity for me. Notably different from conventional tourism projects in Kurdistan, it marks a significant departure in the local landscape, promising both innovation and lasting impact. I attribute my capability and confidence in undertaking this responsibility to the comprehensive education I received at my university. The institution not only instilled knowledge but also cultivated leadership qualities, managerial acumen, and the entrepreneurial mindset essential for steering projects of this magnitude. I extend my gratitude for equipping me and others with the skills to forge successful futures.

HAZHAR QADIR

Project Manager, Anti-Human Trafficking Expert



In 2007, I was granted the opportunity to pursue a degree in Politics and International Relations at UKH. I proudly graduated in 2012 with first-class honors. Subsequently, in 2015, I embarked on my master's journey at the same university, achieving yet another first-class honors distinction. During my time at UKH, I not

only forged lifelong friendships but also discovered my strengths and weaknesses, honed my skills, and cultivated a profound interest in humanitarian endeavors.

My academic foundation from UKH, combined with prior experience in humanitarian contexts, allowed me to enrich my understanding of essential literature in humanitarian development principles. I delved into areas such as human rights advocacy, combating human trafficking, empowerment of women and youth, promotion of gender equality, fostering social cohesion, conflict mitigation, accountability, governance, and advocacy with International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs). Today, as a proficient Program Manager, Program Specialist, Project Advisor, and a certified expert in combating human trafficking, I attribute a significant portion of my success to UKH. The university provided me with the expertise, intellect, and self-confidence necessary to accomplish my goals and objectives.

To me, UKH remains an indelible place where I fostered my dreams and earned esteemed degrees and qualifications. It was at UKH that my interests flourished, my personal growth was nurtured, and enduring friendships were forged. Thank you, UKH.

ALI YOUSIF

Co-founder and CEO of Levant Line Company

In the corridors of the University of Kurdistan - Hawler, I, Ali Yousif Abdulkareem, took my first steps into the world of Petroleum Engineering, armed with dreams and a thirst for knowledge. Little did I anticipate the twists and turns that awaited me on my professional journey. Post-graduation in 2014, my inaugural role as a Field Engineer with Sanjel Canadian Ltd immersed me in the intricacies of cementing and coil tubing services. However, the shadow of insecurity loomed large as ISIS attacked Mosul, bringing all operations to a sudden standstill at Sanjel.

Undaunted, a month later, I found a new home at International Drilling Fluids & Engineering Services (IDEC) Ltd. Starting as an Admin & Logistics Coordinator, I ascended the ranks, assuming the role of Manager within a year.

In 2016, the call of new challenges led me to Hunt Oil Middle East Ltd. Accepting the position of Lab Technician at the Ain Sifini production facility marked a pivotal moment in my career. Those six years with Hunt Oil molded me, leaving an indelible impact on my technical prowess and overall experience.

Driven by a relentless pursuit of knowledge, I ventured into academia in 2019, commencing my master's in petroleum engineering at the beloved University of Kurdistan - Hawler. This educational pursuit broadened my understanding, enriching the foundation upon which I had built my professional journey.



In 2021, Matrix Drilling Fluids Ltd beckoned, offering me the role of Project Engineer. A year into this role, a realization struck me - the time had come to carve my path. Fueled by determination, Levant Line Ltd was born, a testament to my dream of supplying oil field chemicals.

The journey to establish Levant Line was arduous, demanding countless hours and unwavering dedication. Yet, as the dust settled, the company stood proudly as a symbol of success, a result of relentless day-and-night efforts.

As I reflect on this journey, from university halls to the helm of my entrepreneurial venture, I am grateful for the challenges that shaped me. The story continues, and with each chapter, I look forward to new discoveries, growth, and triumphs.

SKALA MUSTAFA

Cluster Manager at Clariant Company-Dubai



ment to graduate. My journey in the oil and gas industry began at UKH when I interned for Hunt Oil Middle East and stayed for one month on their oil fields, which was a life-changing experience, and that is when I decided I do want to work in this challenging industry.

The start of my oil and gas career began with Hunt Oil Middle East Company for almost 5 fruitful years. I was one of the very first Kurdish women to have worked in the oil fields of Hunt Oil in the Kurdistan region. When I was still a student at UKH, I was the first female student to have an internship in Hunt Oil's fields for one month, which later paved the path for many other female engineers and students to work and intern in oil fields. Encouraging young engineering students, especially women, to fearlessly embrace male-dominated industries is a cause close to my heart. Throughout my career, I often found myself to be the only woman, facing difficulties that ultimately shaped my resilience and determination. I encourage every engineering student to not fear the idea of working in a male-dominated industry; I have done it, so can you. It is the challenges that make us who we are.

My path led me to Kurdistan Pipeline Company (KPC), where I served as a senior engineer in the operations department. Following a rewarding experience, I embraced the role of Country Manager for

the Kurdistan branch of PSE Engineering GmbH, a German engineering company. Currently, I work for Clariant company in Dubai in the dynamic role of Cluster Manager of Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, Turkey, and Kuwait. It has been a very exciting career path, but every experience is accompanied by its own challenges. Being the only woman is one of the biggest challenges in an industry dominated by more than 90% men worldwide, that despite the challenges, the oil and gas industry faces every day in terms of political and technical difficulties.

I proudly carry with me the spirit of UKH that has been my guiding compass throughout my career. While in this platform, I encourage every UKHian to not give up on changing the shape of your future society and continue breaking the boundaries and barriers on your path.

Reflecting on my journey from a UKH graduate to where I stand today, I am overwhelmed with gratitude towards UKH for the role it has played in shaping my career and life. All the sleepless nights studying, and the long hours of lectures have paid off now.

UKH offered more than just petroleum engineering scientific material; it was an immersion into the world of possibilities, and UKH equipped us with a lot of soft skills vital in my career and in today's world. I studied petroleum engineering and was part of the first group of the Natural Resources depart-