

Narrative Report

GiveOut aims to keep our reporting requirements proportionate to the size of the grants awarded, minimising the administrative burden on our grant partners. If you have already submitted a narrative report to another funder covering a similar period as your grant from GiveOut, you may submit that report instead of using this template and we will follow up if we require any additional information. Alternatively, you can opt for a video call with GiveOut’s Head of Grant-Making to provide a verbal report instead of completing this document.

Section 1: General Information

Organisation name	IraqQueer
Contact person	Ayaz Kado
Location(s) (areas, countries, regions)	Iraq
Start date of grant period	November 2023
End date of grant period	August 2024
Amount of funding received	19,100 GBP
Amount of funding spent	19,000

1.1 Please provide information on any significant changes that may have affected your work in the past year, such as changes in government, shifts in LGBTQI movement building, funding variations, or notable environmental, political, or social issues.

The past year has seen significant changes affecting LGBTQI rights and safety in Iraq, largely due to a new anti-LGBT+ law passed by the Iraqi parliament in April 2024. This legislation criminalizes queer identities, imposing sentences of up to 15 years in prison for LGBTQI individuals, which has led to increased violence, mental health crises, social isolation, and other severe consequences for the community. This change not only affects the lives of LGBTQI individuals but also impacts the work of organizations advocating for their rights in Iraq, forcing them to adapt their strategies under heightened risk.

Since the law’s enactment, LGBTQI individuals have faced a marked increase in harassment and violence, often instigated by both state and non-state actors emboldened by the law’s criminalization of queer identities. The stigma and fear of punishment create an environment where discrimination and attacks are seen as justified, putting individuals at constant risk. This shift has exacerbated mental health struggles within the LGBTQI community, with rising cases of anxiety, depression, and social isolation as individuals attempt to hide their identities and avoid detection. In many cases, this has forced LGBTQI individuals to sever ties with family, friends, and social networks, leading to significant emotional distress.

Access to healthcare has become another critical issue. Many LGBTQI individuals are now reluctant to seek medical help due to fears of harassment, exposure, or even arrest

at healthcare facilities. This includes essential services like mental health support and HIV/AIDS treatment, which are now dangerously out of reach for many in the community. This isolation and lack of access to necessary services further marginalize LGBTQI individuals, heightening their vulnerability and diminishing their quality of life.

The legislation has also impacted advocacy and support networks. LGBTQI activists face severe repercussions, including imprisonment and violence, making activism incredibly dangerous. As a result, many allies have withdrawn their support, leaving LGBTQI individuals to operate in a clandestine and fragmented manner. Underground networks, which offer mutual aid and safety, are now critical for community survival but are fraught with risks of infiltration and discovery. This shift to underground activism significantly changes the operational dynamics for organizations supporting LGBTQI rights in Iraq, demanding a greater emphasis on security and confidentiality.

Furthermore, the hostile legal environment has forced many LGBTQI Iraqis to consider asylum and migration as viable, albeit risky, options. The desire to escape persecution has led to an increase in asylum-seeking attempts, which often involve dangerous and unauthorized migration routes. This movement can create a brain drain, depleting Iraq of a diverse population and diminishing the broader community's support base.

The international response has been limited, with minimal pressure applied on the Iraqi government. However, human rights organizations and some foreign governments, like Germany, have begun calling for action.

1.2 Please list any governance or executive staff changes within the past year, including roles affected and the reasons for these changes, if relevant.

The enactment of Iraq's anti-LGBT+ bill in 2024 has compelled IraQueer to undergo significant changes in staffing, strategy, and security. The hostile environment created by this law, which criminalizes LGBTQI identities and fosters violence and discrimination, has endangered the lives of staff members and activists, leading to an urgent need for staff restructuring. Many allies have distanced themselves due to the heightened risks, necessitating new hires who are trained to operate covertly and under increased pressure. To adapt, IraQueer has had to re-strategize its work, focusing more on underground support and secure, discreet communication channels. Extra security measures, including encryption and anonymous networks, have become essential to protect both the staff and the community, ensuring that critical resources and support can continue to reach LGBTQI individuals safely amid this challenging climate.

Section 2: Narrative Reporting

2.1 Please summarise the work your organisation undertook during the grant period. Include a short summary of key programs, activities, and achievements.

In the past year, IraQueer has undertaken extensive work to support and advocate for the

LGBTQI community in Iraq amid increasing challenges, particularly following the introduction of the anti-LGBT+ law. IraQueer’s key programs include case management, education, advocacy, and international legal collaboration to safeguard LGBTQI rights. With case management, IraQueer has seen a rise in cases needing immediate support since the law’s passage, handling these through a system developed in the previous year to document and manage community needs efficiently. Education and awareness efforts have involved media and radio outreach to dispel myths and address stigma, along with the creation of a safety and security guide for the community.

A significant part of IraQueer’s advocacy has been through its participation in the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, where it presented a formal submission highlighting the adverse effects of the Iraqi government’s anti-LGBT+ legislation. This UPR submission plays a crucial role in bringing international attention to Iraq’s human rights violations against LGBTQI individuals, aiming to increase diplomatic pressure for policy changes. Additionally, IraQueer collaborated with 47 legal firms, including ReedSmith, to collect evidence and information to present to the UN Human Rights Rapporteur, pressing for accountability and actions against the Iraqi government.

Collaborative efforts also extend to various partners, such as Art15 and Gala-Iraq, which support activities like the Q Camp—an initiative to foster leadership and advocacy skills within the community—and Pride Baghdad. Furthermore, IraQueer has been working with Egyptian NGOs to learn safe and effective activism strategies within hostile environments, and they maintain regular meetings with diplomatic missions to discuss the implications of the law and prevent its extension to other regions like the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

Through strategic reallocation of funds and partnerships with organizations such as Madre and Freedom House, IraQueer also provides emergency cash assistance, aiding over a dozen individuals in crisis. Additionally, it supports HIV+ care efforts in Iraq by identifying local LGBTQI-friendly healthcare providers to address an increasing number of cases.

Events like Qawsuna, the largest LGBTQI summit in the region, further showcase IraQueer’s commitment to community building and visibility. Held in Nepal, the summit provided a platform for regional dialogue and collaboration. Collectively, these initiatives highlight IraQueer’s resilient and multifaceted response to the challenges posed by Iraq’s anti-LGBT+ law, ensuring that essential support, advocacy, and international pressure are sustained despite the restrictive environment.

2.2 Please describe how this work led to progress for the LGBTQI community, and where possible, include any evidence to demonstrate this. For example, how did the work increase capacity, change attitudes, create safety and protection, build community, or lead to changes in laws, policies, or practices? If there were any challenges or barriers, please also briefly mention these.

IraQueer's work over the past year has led to meaningful, though challenging, progress for the LGBTQI community in Iraq. Its advocacy and educational efforts have increased awareness of LGBTQI issues, dispelling stigmas and improving understanding through consistent media outreach and the production of safety guides. These efforts contribute to capacity building by equipping community members with tools for self-protection and a better understanding of their rights.

The submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has been a significant milestone, drawing international attention to Iraq's discriminatory policies and generating diplomatic support. By presenting detailed evidence of human rights violations, IraQueer is fostering global accountability and building pressure on the Iraqi government to reconsider its anti-LGBT+ stance. Additionally, IraQueer's collaboration with 47 international legal firms, such as ReedSmith, has allowed for a substantial collection of data supporting potential legal action against the Iraqi government at the UN level. This international approach not only underscores the issue but also provides hope for eventual policy shifts.

On a grassroots level, the increased case management capacity and emergency cash assistance have enabled IraQueer to support a growing number of individuals in crisis, offering them direct relief and safer environments. Programs like Q Camp and partnerships with organizations such as Gala-Iraq have strengthened community ties and leadership skills, fostering resilience within Iraq's queer community.

However, challenges persist. The criminalization of LGBTQI identities continues to put activists and community members at constant risk, necessitating secretive, underground operations. Despite progress in support and capacity, the limited funding and hostile legal environment remain significant obstacles, complicating IraQueer's ability to operate openly and expand its reach. Nonetheless, the organization's persistence in advocacy and support lays essential groundwork for long-term change and increased security for Iraq's LGBTQI community.

Section 3: Stories

In this section, please bring your work to life with stories, including individual experiences and/or quotes from LGBTQI activists, volunteers, employees, event or workshop participants, re-grant partners, or any other community members. Below is a suggested format you could use.

Situation

- Describe the context or situation that necessitated this work. If the case study is about a project, explain why it was needed and what issues it aimed to address.

- If the case study focuses on an individual, what challenges or circumstances led them to seek support?
- If the case study is about a longer-term advocacy piece, what are you advocating for, and why is this important to the community or broader movement?

Task

- What were the key tasks or objectives that needed to be accomplished to address the situation? Outline any initial planning, specific challenges, or obstacles that needed to be overcome?

Action

- Detail the specific actions you took to address the task or situation. Include information on the approach, strategies employed, resources used, and why these actions were critical to achieving your goals.

Result

- If the case study has a completed outcome, what was the result of your actions? Describe the impact of the work on the individual or community, and any measurable changes or successes.
- For ongoing projects or long-term advocacy efforts, what are the intended outcomes and impacts? How do you anticipate these efforts will address the initial situation and benefit the community in the future?

3.1 Please share a story that brings your life to work, including quotes where possible

Case Study: Nasir's Journey – Surviving Violence and Finding Support Through IraQueer

In Iraq, LGBTQI people endure extreme violence and discrimination, often without any legal protections. Many, like Nasir, a gay man from Basra, face brutal abuse and threats of honour killings after their identities are discovered. When Nasir's family learned of his sexual orientation, he was severely beaten, disowned, and threatened with death, leading to both physical and emotional trauma. Forced to support himself having sustained a slipped disc from the violence, Nasir needed urgent medical care, safe housing, and financial assistance to regain stability.

Nasir* sought help from IraQueer, Iraq's primary LGBTQI organisation. Having followed IraQueer's work, he reached out to them as a last resort, knowing they were the only organisation openly advocating for LGBTQI rights in Iraq. IraQueer quickly responded, providing him with an emergency grant. This financial support enabled Nasir to rent a room in a remote agricultural area outside of Basra, away from the threats posed by his family. The grant also covered his living expenses and essential medical treatments for his injury. With this support, he was finally able to consult a doctor and begin much-needed treatment, helping him recover physically.

Recognising the deep emotional scars from his ordeal, IraQueer also provided Nasir with

psychological support. This ongoing care was crucial in helping him cope with the trauma of the violence, threats, and isolation he had endured. Regular check-ins and access to mental health resources allowed him to process his experiences and rebuild his resilience.

The comprehensive assistance Nasir received significantly improved his well-being. As his physical condition improved, he began contemplating a return to work. The stability of having his rent and living expenses covered meant he could focus on his recovery. The psychological support helped him regain hope and stability, giving him a chance to consider a safer future. Although he is still considering emigrating for his security, IraQueer's support has allowed him the space to plan his next steps without the immediate pressure of survival.

"I contacted IraQueer because it is the only organisation in Iraq that is concerned with queer people and stands by them and defends their rights," Nasir shared. "IraQueer supported me psychologically and financially. It was my only refuge"

Nasir's story underscores the vital role of organisations like IraQueer in providing life-saving support to LGBTQI individuals in crisis. By addressing both physical and mental health needs and offering financial stability, IraQueer has helped him recover from trauma and begin rebuilding his life.

*Name have been changed to protect the safety and security of the individual.

3.2 Please attach any photos, videos, printed materials, publications, newsletters, leaflets, illustrations or other materials that could be used to promote your work.

Section 4: Partner Support

Through GiveOut's LGBTQI Legal Aid Fund, we have global law firms available to provide pro-bono legal services to our grant partners. Are there any areas where you could benefit from pro-bono legal services? If so, please describe the project or work required, and how legal support could assist.

We already collaborate with Reedsmitth, but this is really good to know. Thank you.

Information sharing consent

I give my consent that any images, videos and information I have/my organisation has provided to GiveOut and The Funding Network may continue to be shared with third parties in private correspondence, on GiveOut and The Funding Network’s social media platforms and website.

I understand that I/my organisation are free to withdraw consent at any time, particularly should security and safety concerns arise.

X

This form was completed by:

Name	Ayaz Kado
Role	Executive Director
Date	06/11/2024