



# The Impact of Armed Conflicts on Music

Case Study: Mosul 2014-2021

Study Design, Supervision and Editing  
**Basma El Husseiny**

Field Research  
**Nahidh Al-Ramadani**

Desk Research  
**Farah Kaddour**





Action for Hope  
العمل للأمل

# The Impact of Armed Conflicts on Music

## Case Study: Mosul 2014-2021

Study Design, Supervision and Editing  
**Basma El Hussein**

Field Research  
**Nahidh Al-Ramadani**

Other field research participants  
**Tariq Hazem Shukr and Mustafa Shaham Kamal**

Desk Research  
**Farah Kaddour**

Translation to English  
**DocStream Team**

Supported by  
the British Council - Cultural Protection Fund



Department for  
Digital, Culture  
Media & Sport

In collaboration with the Book Forum,  
a cultural and educational association in Mosul



All contents of this study are licensed for use under the Creative Commons license



(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

# The Impact of Armed Conflicts on Music

## Case Study: Mosul 2014-2021

### Introduction

Since its founding in 2015, Action for Hope has sought to integrate arts and culture into the social fabric of societies that have endured, or are enduring, difficult conditions such as armed conflict, displacement, impoverishment, and/or marginalization. The organization has also worked on preserving intangible cultural heritage at risk of extinction due to war, displacement, or extreme poverty, with an emphasis on keeping this heritage alive and lived rather than merely turning it into archival material. Action for Hope has provided many programs to achieve these two goals in marginalized and refugee communities in Lebanon and Jordan. These programs include cultural relief convoys, music and film schools, theater and storytelling training, and numerous other activities. In these programs and others, Action for Hope has shaped its course of action with the aim of protecting and promoting the cultural rights of marginalized and at-risk communities in the Arab region.

It was with these two goals in mind that Action for Hope began its work in the city of Mosul and Nineveh Governorate in 2018, months after the city was liberated from ISIS. As such, it launched the program *Listening to Iraq*, sponsored by UNESCO and funded by the European Syndicate, to document, teach, and revive traditional and popular music in the Nineveh Governorate. This program is ongoing and still being developed, and through it, we hope to contribute to enriching cultural life in Mosul –and give young people the opportunity to learn traditional and folk music.

Over the past three years, we have taken note of some of the similarities and differences between our work in Iraq and our previous work teaching and reviving traditional Syrian music through the Action for Hope music schools in Lebanon and Jordan. These schools also offered music production training to graduates, issued the first guide<sup>1</sup> for alternative musical education of Syrian traditional music, and most recently, documented this musical heritage through the Syria Music Map website.<sup>2</sup> All of these programs are supported and funded by the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund. While working on these programs, it was impossible to overlook how similar the devastation caused by war had been in the cities of Aleppo and Mosul or the disastrous impact of armed conflict on the cultural and artistic landscapes of Syria and Iraq. In both countries, we have also seen the mass migration of musicians, music teachers, and

---

<sup>1</sup> New Voice – A Guide to an Alternative Music Education: <https://www.act4hope.org/2020/10/05/new-voice-guide-2>.

<sup>2</sup> Syria Music Map website: <https://syriamusicmap.org/en/home>.

instrument makers, leaving opportunities to learn music scarce and obtaining musical instruments difficult.

Additionally, as a result of war and displacement, there is a risk of losing musical heritage. In his book *Syrian Traditional Music*, Hassan Abbas stated that, “In all its variations, traditional music in Syria had remained a living art throughout the ages. It was transmitted from generation to generation, coexisting and interacting with the music of its neighbors, developing without losing its authenticity. [Traditional music] is a central element of the intangible cultural heritage of communities, groups, and individuals, and by preserving it, people preserve a large component of their memory and the foundations of their identity. However, the war that has been raging in Syria for years threatens to damage a large part of this heritage, or perhaps completely destroy it. The killing of hundreds of thousands of Syrians has eliminated many of the bearers of this heritage, and the displacement of millions from their lands, with many of them dispersed across the globe, splits communities and weakens cultural identity, its associated practices, and the traditions and experiences that bring people together and unite them. This is what puts music and other elements of heritage at risk.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in general, the conditions under which those involved in music work in Iraq and Syria are similar to those in Palestine, which has been under occupation and in a state of ongoing conflict for decades. This, in turn, has led to the displacement of many Palestinian musicians, music teachers, and instrument makers. The similarity of these contexts can serve as a basis for mutual learning between institutions and individuals working in music in the three countries.

Why have we given priority to traditional and folk music in particular? It is because we believe that intangible cultural heritage, especially music and song, is the main bearer of popular culture and peoples’ historical, geographical, ethnic, and religious particularities, as well as their differences and diversity. This is especially the case for people who do not have access to the most modern means of cultural expression and creation. Traditional music is also what people carry in their memory when they are forced to leave their land, or when finances make it impossible to acquire or maintain tangible cultural products. Traditional music can significantly boost morale, as it is a means of communal and self-expression, as well as being a forum for creative exchange. In *Syrian Traditional Music*, Hassan Abbas writes, “While traditional music always requires institutions for preservation, conservation, and documentation, its repository remains the hearts of its people, and its flame continues to burn no matter how tall the rubble or how immense the heap of ash. Continuous hard work is inevitably needed if spirit is to be breathed into this ember, reviving and resurrecting it within the next generation, and in the generations to come.”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Hassan Abbas, *Syrian Traditional Music*, publication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2018, p. 25

<sup>4</sup> Hassan Abbas, *Syrian Traditional Music*, p. 15

This study of the impact of armed conflicts on music in the city of Mosul is an attempt to monitor and develop an understanding of the effects of three years of armed conflict and ISIS occupation of Mosul, the US invasion of Iraq, and the ensuing sectarian armed strife. This attempt, in which we hope to succeed, may also be useful for enhancing our understanding of the impact of violence on the music landscape in Syria and Palestine, arriving at specific ideas and proposals that can reverse it, create a supportive and stimulating environment for music creation, and preserve musical heritage.

More specifically, this study aims to provide information about the state of musical practices, production, and education in the city of Mosul in 2021. It also seeks to provide an objective analysis of the impact of armed conflicts on these aspects of musical practice based on the course of Mosul's experience over the past seven years. Additionally, it seeks to allow for comparing the state of music in the city of Mosul with music in other Arab cities that have undergone or are undergoing through similar conditions, and to provide practical and realistic recommendations for organizations, individuals, and companies working in music in such areas.

## Research Methodology

This study proceeds from the basic assumption that war and armed conflict negatively affect music creation and production, as well as all the professions and activities associated with it. This assumption is, of course, informed by the well-documented impact of war and conflict on all aspects of daily life. Working on this assumption, we opted to conduct field research as well as theoretical research, then moving towards an analysis of the results of both methods and providing practical recommendations. Also, the results and recommendations will be presented in a seminar that includes music specialists from Iraq, Syria, and Palestine for consultation, and the outcomes of this seminar will be used for later study. It should be noted that this study is not concerned with any particular artistic approach to music, but rather approaches music in Mosul from a cultural, sociological, and economic point of view.

During the preparatory stage of this research project, field and theoretical research proceeded in tandem, primarily to save time. However, this approach gave the researchers the opportunity to compare theoretical information and research, most of which was found online, and data collected from questionnaires and personal interviews, thereby ensuring integrity of the findings while maximizing their volume and scope. The field research began with the identification of 5 main fields of activity related to music which are music creation and performance, music education, music production, and the sale, repair and rental of musical instruments, sound equipment, and theater equipment, as well as the societal practices related to music. We designed a questionnaire to collect information on each of these five areas separately<sup>5</sup> identifying a sample for field research consisting of 50 people divided across the five areas, with 15 forms on music creation and performance, 10 forms on music education, 10 forms on music production, 5 forms on the sale, rental and repair of instruments and equipment, and 10 forms on social practices tied to music.

Later, and in cooperation with the Book Forum in Mosul, we formed a field research team consisting of a principal researcher and two assistant researchers, and this team selected participants in the field research sample.<sup>6</sup> The field research began on the first of October 2021 and continued until mid-November 2021, in parallel with the theoretical research. It should also be noted that only a limited number of theoretical studies could be accessed because of the scarcity of research on music in Mosul, as well as the total absence of research on its music scene over the past two decades. Thus, we had to rely on many press sources.

The photos included in the study are either archival or they were provided over the course of the field research period.

---

<sup>5</sup> Appendix 1: The Five Questionnaire Forms

<sup>6</sup> Appendix 2: List of Questionnaire Respondents

## Research Scope

**Time frame:** This study focuses on the period extending from the occupation of Mosul by ISIS in 2014 until preparations for this study began in 2021. Nevertheless, the study addressed the impact of the US invasion and years of sectarian violence, as well as the presence of al-Qaeda between 2003 to 2014. It also refers, of course, to the history of music in Mosul and Iraq in general before this period.

**Geographical scope:** This study covers musical practices in all districts and neighborhoods of the city of Mosul in its two sides of Tigris. While Western Mosul has the broader urban expansion, as well as the higher degree of destruction during the battles against ISIS, the Eastern part of the city, home to the University of Mosul, was not spared from destruction. The study is limited to the music scene within the well-known borders of the city of Mosul and does not extend to its surrounding villages and towns.

**Musical scope:** This study prioritizes traditional (oriental and religious) music and folk music, whether originating from the city or from elsewhere – say, from rural or desert areas. Musical performances and practices associated with social occasions, seasons, and holidays are also given attention. The study also covers other musical genres such as Western classical music, Western pop music, hip-hop, jazz, and others that have been identified in Mosul during the time frame of the study.

Within its scope, this study addresses music creation – writing, composing, and arrangement; musical performance – solo or group performance and singing; music education both in public and private institutions; music production such as audio and visual recording, event organizing, and online distribution; and social activities where music is present (celebrations, occasions, holidays, and social events both public and private). The research also extends to professions related to music such as the manufacture, trade, and repair of musical instruments as well as the rental and sale of audio equipment, recording spaces, etc. The study does not address technical aspects of musical practice but is rather concerned with the cultural, social, and economic aspects of these activities.



## Music in Mosul: A Historical Overview

While music in Mosul is as old as the city itself, whose urban origins date back to 2000 B.C., the musical heritage now known in the city dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The city established itself as a trading center along the trade route with the Near East<sup>7</sup> and the postal route to Istanbul, the most significant metropolis in the East at the time. Mosul's geographical location enriched its musical repertoire, where one could hear tunes from many countries most notably Syria, Egypt, Turkey, and those of the Arabian Peninsula. Also contributing to this enrichment was the city's ethnic and religious diversity, which peaked in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Muslims, Christians, Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Shabaks, Yazidis, Armenians, Sabeans, Mandaean and others lived there together.<sup>8</sup>

In his book *The Musical Heritage in Mosul*, which was published in<sup>9</sup> 1964 and perhaps before that date in Mosul itself, Muhammad Saddiq Al-Jalili records the styles and genres of music prevalent in Mosul in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The book mentions the *muwashahat* and prophetic praises associated with the celebration of Prophet Muhammad's birth; dhikr and chanting circles of Sufi orders; songs related to crafts and trades; songs for coffee houses and events held in parks. It also includes the Mosuli *tanzil* (religious *muwashahat*), with its most famous composer Mullah Othman Al-Mosseli, among the most prominent composers in the history of this region, as well as songs and melodies from Baghdad, the Levant, Egypt, and Turkey. In his book, al-Jalili lists all the musical maqams (scales) used in Mosul, putting their number to 73 maqams, including the most popular one; Al Mokhalef.

Since the establishment of the Iraqi Kingdom in 1921, all forms of musical activity flourished in Iraq. Then came the Iraqi independence from the British Mandate in 1932 and then, in 1936, the founding of the first music institute later named the Institute of Fine Arts. In July of the same year, radio would be introduced to Iraq with Radio Baghdad, which would go on to play a major role in spreading and developing music creations in the same year.<sup>10</sup> Mosul benefited from this vital music scene, and its composers and singers took part in concerts in Baghdad. Mosul also hosted concerts for singers and musicians from all over Iraq, as well as from Syria, Egypt, and Turkey. Despite this, Mosul's musical revival did not lead to the establishment of public or private educational or cultural institutions concerned with music in the city, with the exception of the

---

<sup>7</sup> Bassem Hamoudi, "On Author and Writer Mohammad Sadiq Al-Jalili and Musical Heritage of Mosul" (Arabic), Al Mada Culture – Issue no. 815, 20 November 2006, link: <https://almadapaper.net/sub/11-815/11.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> James Playfair, *A System of Geography: Ancient and Modern*, 1913.

<sup>9</sup> Hamoudi, Al Mada Culture – Issue no. 815, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Habib Zaher Al Abbas, "Manhal Ponders the Developments of Music and Song in Iraq in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century," Chapter 4, Kurdish Ministry of Culture, 2013.



more recent Maqam House, which was completely destroyed in the battles to liberate Mosul from ISIS.<sup>11</sup>

In 1958, the monarchy in Iraq was deposed by a group of army officers and cadres of the Iraqi Communist Party. Less than eight months later, another group of army officers, mostly from the city of Mosul, rebelled against the new rulers in what was known as the Shawwaf Uprising or the Mosul Uprising of 1959.<sup>12</sup> This uprising was violently suppressed, its leaders executed, and the city subjected to an onslaught of looting and indiscriminate killing that terrorized its people and brought daily life to a halt and, of course, suspended all musical and cultural activity. These tragic events have had prolonged implications on the collective consciousness of the city's residents, and the Mosul community would only recover many years later.

In 1969, with initiative from the Governorate of Mosul, the city held its first Spring Festival which included concerts and folklore performances. The festival sought to revive the ancient Assyrian celebration of the spring season (Akitu) in homage to the ancient city and its diverse population. The festival was held annually for 34 years without interruption, and the program consistently included large operettas and choirs with the participation of a large number of singers, musicians, and dancers. However, hit by the economic blockade imposed on Iraq in the 1990s, the festival program was scaled down each year until finally being suspended after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 with only one Spring Festival held since –in 2018.



*A picture of the Spring Festival from the archive*

However, hit by the economic blockade imposed on Iraq in the 1990s, the festival program was scaled down each year until finally being suspended after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 with only one Spring Festival held since –in 2018.

The US invasion of Iraq in March 2003 led to waves of violence and sectarian conflict that rippled across the whole of Iraq, leading to the deaths of nearly ten thousand people<sup>13</sup> and the destruction of most of the country's public service infrastructure, including culture and education. Mosul fell two days after Baghdad and became an open arena for conflict between the invading American forces on the one hand, and militias and armed groups on the other. Security conditions were dire and some intellectuals and artists fell victims to kidnapping and extortion, with large numbers of them fleeing to other Iraqi cities or migrating outside Iraq. What

<sup>11</sup> Recording of the Mosul Heritage music group in Beit Al-Maqam on Laylat Al-Qadr in 2013:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2htQ7D3XrY>

<sup>12</sup> Al-Janabi, Mohammed Khaled, "The Shawaf Uprising or the Mosul Massacre of 1959?" (Arabic), Al-Mothaqaf Newspaper, Issue no. 1643, link: <https://www.almothaqaf.com/ab/freepens-09/42914-----1959---->

<sup>13</sup> "The Impact of the US Invasion on Sectarian Political Violence in Iraq" (Arabic), Democratic Arab Center, 2019, link: <https://www.democraticac.de/?p=61716>.

ensued was an eruption of violent criminal acts, like the murder Paulos Faraj Rahho, the Chaldean Catholic Archeparch of Mosul in March of 2008.<sup>14</sup>

In the years that followed the US invasion, armed extremist groups took advantage of widespread hostility to it brewing in Mosul to garner support in the city. Their influence over Mosul communities continued to expand and they managed to spread their fundamentalist teachings against arts in general, and against music and song in particular. Artistic activity in Mosul dwindled both due to the security conditions and the prevailing opinion that arts are religiously prohibited. The Spring Theater, where large musical concerts and celebrations had been held, was closed. From then on, Mosul saw no musical events until the Musicians Association Festival which was held for one edition in 2008,<sup>15</sup> after a brief period of relative calm and stability in the city and the reopening of the Mosul Airport which had been closed since 1993 due to the international blockade. After the withdrawal of US forces in 2011, amid a total lack of effective engagement by the Iraqi central government, and with public services in Mosul almost non-existent, the influence of extremist groups continued to rise until al-Qaeda took hold of the city economically and socially.<sup>16</sup> Then, in April 2013, the formation of the Islamic State, a branch of al-Qaeda that adopts even more extremist ideas and is known for its severely violent practices, was announced.

ISIS occupied the city of Mosul in June 2014, imposing on its residents laws and teachings which, of course, prohibited all forms of artistic expression or practice. Over the years in which the city was under ISIS control, the group's militants looted, damaged, and destroyed the Mosul Museum<sup>17</sup> depriving the city of priceless human heritage. The Mosul Central Library, which contained thousands of books, as well as numerous archeological sites spread across the city and its outskirts, met the same fate. Immediately after occupying Mosul, ISIS strictly prohibited all forms of art, especially music, even inside private homes and in family gatherings. ISIS militants also destroyed the Spring Theater, also known as the Mosul Central Theater, which was built in 1972<sup>18</sup> and held large concerts for many well-known musical artists. It also raided and destroyed the offices of musicians in the al-Dawwassah district and music recording studios such as Friends Recordings, setting musical instruments and sound equipment on fire according to the testimonies of field research respondents. ISIS also abolished music education from school curricula and prohibited purchase and sale of music recordings and playing music cars, buses,

---

<sup>14</sup>Ishtar TV, "Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho: 20 November 1942 - 12 March 2008" (Arabic), link:

<https://www.ishtartv.com/viewarticle,59684.html>

<sup>15</sup>Radio Hurr Iraq, "A Festival of Music and Song in Mosul" (Arabic), link:

<https://www.iraqhurr.org/a/1679705.html>.

<sup>16</sup>Arij Network, "Pay or Die: Al-Qaeda's Levies Take Hold in Mosul" (Arabic), 14 October 2012, link:

<https://bit.ly/3uelKOD>.

<sup>17</sup>"UNESCO Sounds the Alarm" (Arabic), RT Arabic, February 2015, link: <https://bit.ly/3qZQII2>.

<sup>18</sup>A video report by Al-Ghad Radio on Facebook about the history of the Spring Theater:

<https://www.facebook.com/FMalghad/posts/4195233577206663..>

homes, and any other location, as well as weddings, the folklore songs and dances of which were prohibited as well.<sup>19</sup>

Many musicians and those involved in music production and the sale and repair of musical instruments, were arrested, put on trial, flogged, and intimidated, culminating in the execution of a young man, Ayham Hussein, on charges of listening to music,<sup>20</sup> thereby forcing many musicians and singers to flee the city.<sup>21</sup>



*Photo of the destroyed Library of Mosul from the archive*

It is also important to note that the battles to liberate Mosul and the accompanying heavy aerial bombardments of the city totally destroyed the most prominent musical site in the city, the Iraqi Maqam House, which was not rebuilt after the liberation of Mosul.<sup>22</sup> These air strikes also turned two important theaters that had been used for musical events to rubble, the Ibn al-Atheer Theater and the Workers' Theater.

For three years under ISIS rule, which followed years of occupation, security turmoil, and social strife, Mosul endured what was felt as thirty years of oppression, persecution, and violence. The psychological and social ramifications of these experiences continue to bear on Mosul communities who have yet to abandon their aversion to music and song, as parents are reluctant to allow their sons and daughters to learn music.

Between the liberation of Mosul from ISIS in June 2017 and 2021, civil society organizations, youth activists, and international organizations made many attempts to revive music appreciation and activity in Mosul. The following is a summary of some of the most prominent initiatives during this period:

<sup>19</sup>“Alaa Rashidi, “Cities Deprived of Music” (Arabic), Al-Jumhuriya, 12 March 2020, link: <https://bit.ly/3tYN4A1>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Appendix 3: Incidents of Persecution of Musical Artist in Mosul (2014-2017).

<sup>22</sup>Arabic Post website: <https://arabicpost.net/art-and-views/yR/2019/08/02/Tarab-on-the-ruins-of-Iraqi-ISIS-playing-music>.

- Peace Festival: The first festival held in Mosul after its liberation from ISIS. The first edition of the festival was held on the International Day of Peace on September 21, 2017 in the stadium of Mosul University. It was organized by activist Saqr al-Zakaria and a group of volunteers from the city and supported by several non-governmental organizations. More than 15,000 residents of Mosul attended the festival, including a decent number of women and children. Several concerts, folklore dances, as well as art and handicraft were part of its program.<sup>23</sup> The Mullah Uthman Al-Mosuli Ensemble was among the groups and artists taking part.<sup>24</sup>
- Renowned musician Karim Wasfi held eight concerts in 2018 and 2019 at various locations and venues in the city of Mosul. The program included works from the Western classical tradition as well as a series of religious chants (*anashid*) in the 2019 edition. These concerts strongly contributed to raising international media attention about the devastation that befell the city.
- The Light Orchestra led by violinist and composer Ameen Mokdad<sup>25</sup> performed in October 2019. This concert, in which 29 female musicians participated, was held in the “Cultural Group” district of East Mosul.<sup>26</sup>
- The Listening to Iraq Project,<sup>27</sup> designed and led by Action for Hope, began in late 2019 with a survey of musical heritage in the Nineveh Governorate. This was followed by a seminar on the diversity of Mosul’s musical heritage, a workshop for young musicians, and two concerts in late 2020. In 2021, over eight months, 25 young musicians were trained in reading music sheets and solfege, as well as



*Fourth Peace Festival in 2021 - Ali Al-Baroudi*



*Concert by Karim Wasfi and Art for Peadce Foundation – Ali lyad*

<sup>23</sup> IWPR Iraq, “Mosul's First Peace Festival”, Project Highlight, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 4 October 2017, link: <https://iwpr.net/impact/mosuls-first-peace-festival>.

<sup>24</sup> Peace Festival, Facebook page, link: <https://www.facebook.com/lq4peace/posts/1650935644918713>.

<sup>25</sup> Ameen Mokdad became famous for defying ISIS and performing a concert in April 2017 when ISIS was still in control of parts of Mosul, source: <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-39656868>.

<sup>26</sup> Sputnik Arabic, “Iraqi Musicians and instrumentalists in a ‘Light Orchestra’ “ – Sputnik Agency - Arabic, 24 October 2019, link: <https://bit.ly/3r2AC08>.

<sup>27</sup> Listening to Iraq, Action for Hope website, link: <https://www.act4hope.org/2020/05/23/faael-2-2/>.



being afforded the opportunity to practice their chosen musical instruments. It also included training in four musical traditions: Mosuli, Turkmen, rural and Syriac. The project will conclude in 2022 with an international festival for traditional music in Mosul and the establishment of 4 small ensembles.

- A concert by Watar Orchestra, an ensemble led by renowned violinist Mohamed Mahmoud that includes more than 40 musicians and instrumentalists, performed a diverse program of traditional and modern music in the Spring Theater prior to its restoration in April 2021.<sup>28</sup>
- Taraneem Al Hadbaa, a religious group that performs Sufi *anashid*, which the city is famous for, as well as to Mosul *tanzils* primarily performs on religious occasions, holidays, and social events.<sup>29</sup>
- In addition to these initiatives, some cultural venues such as the Book Forum, The Station, and the Qantara Cultural Cafe offer various musical events to a smaller audience. All of these activities contribute to reinvigorating musical activity and improving the community's attendance and reception.



*Training of young musicians as part of  
Listening to Iraq – Man Hasbani*

<sup>28</sup> AlArab, "A Concert Brings Crowds Back to the Spring Theater" (Arabic), 10 April 2021, link:

<https://bit.ly/3rzMLJg>.

<sup>29</sup> The ensemble's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063572357324>

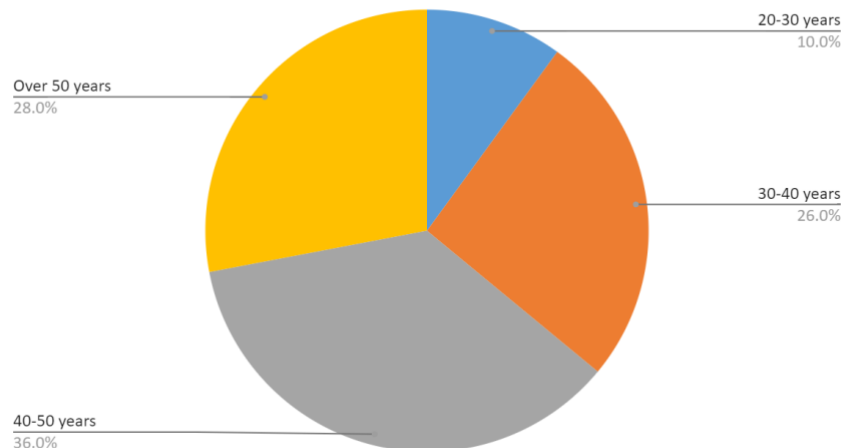
## Research Findings

This part of the study presents the findings of field and theoretical research across the five areas of emphasis, namely: **Music creation and performance**, **music education**, **music production**, **music-related professions**, and **music-related social practices**. It should be noted that these findings are subject to debate and further research, as they are the result of a limited research process conducted between September and November 2021. We would also have to mention the scarcity of sources of information, data sources, or research about music in Mosul over the past two decades which, in most cases, forced us to rely on press sources to supplement the data collected from questionnaires and personal interviews. The 50 research forms were distributed as follows:

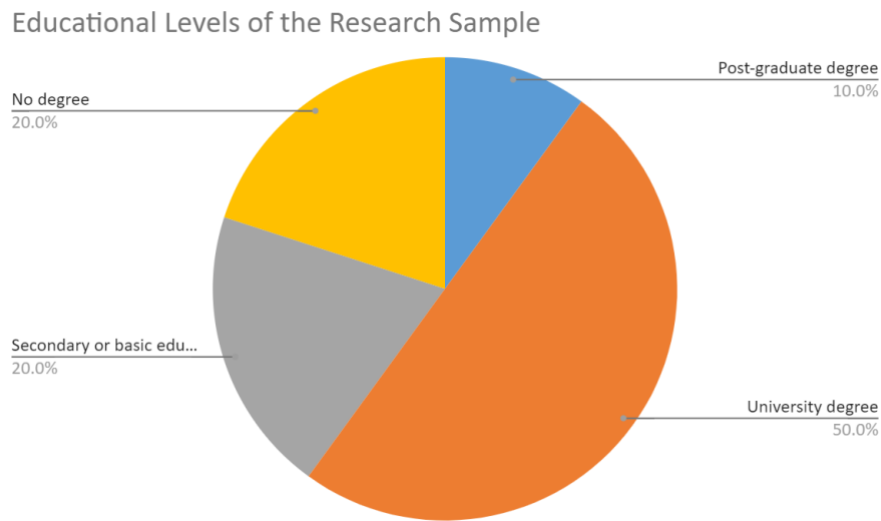
- Music creation and performance: 15 respondents
- Music education: 10 respondents
- Music production: 10 respondents
- Music-related professions: 5 respondents
- Music-related social practices: 10 respondents

The field research sample consisted of 50 individuals, all residing in the city of Mosul. The vast majority of respondents are males, with two women only, one of whom refused to provide her full name, taking part. This sharp disparity speaks to women's exclusion from the cultural scene in Mosul –and from public life more broadly, as will be discussed in some detail later. The ages of the research participants are distributed as follows:

Age Distribution of Research Sample



The educational levels of respondents also varied, and are distributed as follows:



## 1- Music creation and performance:

There are no accurate estimates of the number of composers, instrumentalists, and singers living in Mosul, but 287 individuals pay the membership fees to the Musicians Syndicate within the Nineveh Branch of the Iraqi Artists Syndicate (IAS). Among them are 75 practicing musicians, according to Tahseen Haddad who chairs the Nineveh branch of the Artists Syndicate.<sup>30</sup> The real number of practicing musicians in Mosul could exceed 500, if we were to include members of the Musicians Association and musicians who are neither members of the Syndicate nor of the association, as well as amateurs who have individually managed to attain a decent degree of musical ability but who are not seeking professional careers in music. Moreover, this estimate does not account for musicians from Mosul who migrated to other countries such as famous local musicians Khaled Muhammad Ali and Layth Siddiq.

Musicians hold concerts in Mosul, albeit infrequently, and rely more on wedding celebrations, social events, and official celebrations. Nowadays, they are contracted through management offices some of which are located in a "Qaisariya"; a small commercial center, in the Karaj al-Shamal area. This is after the music management offices in al-Dawwassah area were destroyed by ISIS militants.



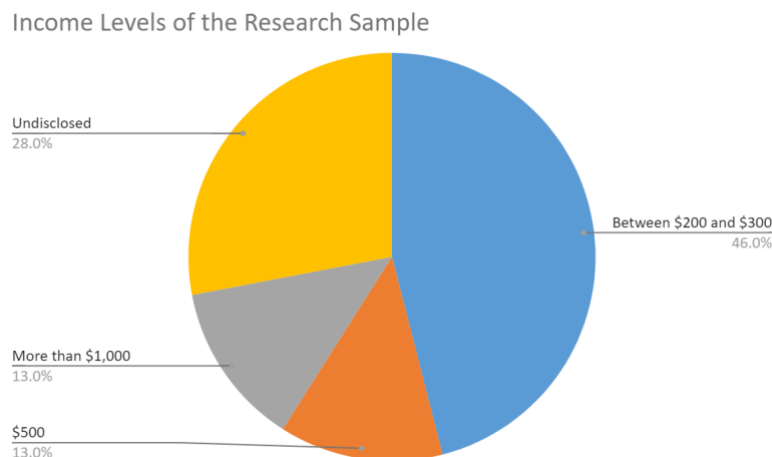
*Dawassa area where the musicians' offices used to be*

The research sample included 15 respondents in the field of music creation and performance, with the ages of many ranging between 40 and 50 (46% of the research sample), and those under 30 or over 50 making up 13% of each category. Most respondents are instrumentalists (67%),

<sup>30</sup> From an interview with Tahseen Haddad conducted by Nahidh al-Ramadani in October 2021, Appendix 4.

followed by vocalists and singers (33%), and some (20%) compose and arrange music. We also found that most respondents (74%) had not obtained a university education. 87% of the respondents depend primarily on music for their livelihoods, while 13% have a public sector job in addition to their work in music. It is important to note that none of the musicians have any form of social security or health insurance, and there is a prevailing lack of clarity regarding the application of intellectual property rights and the ability of musicians to benefit from their authorship and performance of music. Despite legislation that provides for such procedures, there are no administrative or financial mechanisms to enforce such legislation. All of those surveyed are members to the Nineveh Branch of the Iraqi Artists Syndicate or to the Iraqi Musicians Association. These two agencies are mandated to promoting the interests of professional musicians. However, they are unable to carry out this task due to lack of financial resources, according to Tahseen Haddad who heads the IAS in Nineveh, and Talal Shamali, President of the Musicians Association in the governorate. 26% of respondents said they currently reside outside the city of Mosul because their homes had been demolished and they cannot afford to rebuild them, while the remaining musicians said they reside in the city.

The income that musicians make from concerts fluctuates heavily, and singers are often paid more than instrumentalists. Famous singers like Mohamed Zaki make up to 2,000 USD per month from concerts, while less famous singers make around 200 USD per month. 46% of the respondents earned between \$200 and \$300 a month, while 13% said they make \$500. And another 13% said their income exceeded \$1,000, and some opted not to disclose their income. It is important to note that the average public sector salaries are in the range of \$1,000 per month. The following chart shows the different income levels for musicians in Mosul:



The range of instruments used by the musicians in Mosul is somewhat limited. The keyboard, which costs between \$1,000 and \$2,000, is most common, followed by the oud, the price of which ranges between \$200 and \$300. Next are the violin and bouzouki or saz, whose prices range between \$300 and \$500. Musicians typically procure these instruments from Erbil or



Baghdad or order them online, as they are rarely sold in the city of Mosul, where most shops selling musical instruments stores have not reopened yet after being destroyed by ISIS.



*Solo Musical Instruments Store*

Furthermore, there are folkloric and traditional musical instruments such as the rabab, and wind instruments such as the Mijwiz or the Argul, all of which are essential for wedding celebrations and are usually affordable or made by the musician themselves. Percussion instruments, the most common of which are tambourines, are also used in weddings and religious occasions.

All musicians in the research sample have been working in music since before 2014, and most of them (74%) were working in music work prior to the US invasion in 2003, while 26% of them began working in music after this invasion and before the ISIS takeover in 2014. After ISIS entered Mosul and prohibited the practice of music and singing, 73% of the musicians included in the research stopped working in music publicly, while 27% of them continued their work outside the city, in the places to which they were displaced. Some in the latter category organized concerts inside their IDP camps to entertain displaced communities. It is also interesting that 46% of the respondents practiced music in secret while ISIS had been in control through small musical sessions held at home. 60% of the musicians said that they were directly harassed when ISIS had been governing the city due to their reputations as musicians, while the remaining 40% said that they had seen or heard cases of such abuses targeting other musicians.<sup>31</sup> In one horrific incident, aerial bombardment against ISIS positions in the Western part of the city during the battles for its liberation in 2017, destroyed musician Seif Shaheen's family home, killing his brother, visual artist Ismail Hamo and his son Abdullah.<sup>32</sup> This occurred as Seif Shaheen and other musicians were filming a song entitled Mosul Remains Beautiful<sup>33</sup> in the Eastern part of the city.

All of those surveyed said they returned to work in music following the liberation of Mosul from ISIS. They all participated in concerts and events organized by official authorities and civil society initiatives that were held over the past four years, and 13% of them took part in concerts organized or supported by international organizations. Those included in the research sample said that concert audiences are growing reasonably year after year, though attendances have

<sup>31</sup> Appendix 3: Incidents of Persecution of Musical Artist in Mosul

<sup>32</sup> Iraqi Critic, "Death of Artist Ismail Hammo and His Only Child in Nineveh" (Arabic), 22 May 2017, link: <https://www.alnaked-aliraqi.net/article/42226.php>.

<sup>33</sup> Artist Seif Shaheen's channel on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Hgb8qPapNk>.

been lowered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns imposed to contain its spread. 94% of respondents use the internet to publish and distribute their musical works, and their viewers and listeners range from tens to hundreds of thousands. Increasing attendance and listenership numbers indicate a positive change in societal attitudes towards the arts, and this claim was endorsed by 100% of the musicians surveyed.

## 2- Music education:

The research sample included 10 individuals working in music education, all of whom are members of the Iraqi Artists Syndicate. 80% studied music academically, and 20% developed their skills in an informal capacity. On the other hand, we found that 90% of the music educators in the sample have university qualifications and 10% have attained a postgraduate degree. In terms of age groups, half of the respondents are over 50 years old, and 30% range between 40 and 50 years of age. Meanwhile, only 10% of the respondents are between 30 and 40 years of age, and the same percentage applies to those under 30. Most of those surveyed have worked in music education for many years, and 90% of them work in private music education as well as teaching in fine arts institutes specialized in music. 60% of these musical instructors teach oriental instruments, chants, and *muwashahat*, while 40% teach Western instruments. As for those who teach in fine arts institutes, the Ministry of Education provides them with musical instruments, but they must procure their own instruments from Erbil or Baghdad for private instruction. Those who teach in institutes of fine arts also adopt the official curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education, while eschewing official curricula in their private instruction practice and adapting their lessons to the levels of their students. Half of the respondents stated that they use the internet to post music lessons online, and 80% of them uploaded their lessons to YouTube and then posted links to those videos to Facebook to broaden their reach, while the others hired people to produce and upload their video lessons.

Those surveyed who were working in music education spend, on average, between 20 and 24 hours teaching in fine arts institutes, and 4 to 12 hours giving private lessons. Those who teach at institutes of fine arts receive a regular government salary and have social and health insurance while giving private instruction sessions generates around \$350 monthly. In addition to the institutes of fine arts, music teachers sometimes have the opportunity to teach within the programs of some local and international NGOs, such as: Tamkeen Organization, Happy Childhood Institute, Al-Attaa Institute for People with Special Needs, The Station, and Action for Hope. 40% of those surveyed stated that they have intermittently worked in music education programs for some international organizations.

70% of the respondents stopped seeking work in music education after ISIS took over Mosul, going into hiding or burning their instruments to evade severe punishment in case they are found. Meanwhile, 20% were displaced outside the city and continued to work in music education in the areas to which they were displaced, while 10% assumed the risk of continuing to teach music

clandestinely under ISIS rule. Moreover, 60% of the research sample participants said that they were directly harassed during ISIS rule due to their reputations as music teachers, and 30% stated that they had heard about cases of abuse targeting music teachers.

After ISIS lost control of Mosul, all of those included in the research sample returned to Mosul to work in music education, and some had started doing so as the battles to liberate the Western side of the city had been ongoing. All of the respondents reported currently feeling safe while doing their work, and that they also sense a positive change in social attitudes towards music, as shown by the annual increases in the number of applicants to the Institutes of Fine Arts in Mosul.

Currently, the following levels of musical education are available in the city of Mosul:

- Basic Education: In basic education programs, only one session per week is dedicated to the study of arts, and it is usually used to teach drawing and painting or other subjects not related to the arts. They are rarely used to teach music.
- Intermediate Education: Institutes of Fine Arts - Ministry of Education: Young applicants, male and female, are accepted into two separate institutes (which were sex segregated in the 1990s) to study music or plastic arts from the age of 14 to 18. This program qualifies graduates to work as teachers in basic education schools. Fine arts institutes determine how many are admitted each year, and applicants to music departments must pass a music test. These institutes struggle with the scarcity of space and a shortage of instruments. Students do not receive musical instruments to be used on their campuses for practice or rehearsals. Instead, students are obliged to procure their own instruments, which creates disparities between students on the basis of financial ability. All music teachers are graduates of these institutes, and some of them continued their musical studies in Baghdad, going as far as pursuing doctorate degrees.

Although there are departments for theater and visual arts at the University of Mosul, no music education at the university level is offered in the city. The University of Mosul plays a modest role in music education, hosting the Institute of Fine Arts for Girls, which includes the music department, on its campus, in addition to organizing concerts, and publishing papers and studies related to the field.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Among the Mosul University publications available on the website EMarifa: <https://bit.ly/3fW6wVR>.

### 3- Music production:

The research sample includes 10 individuals who work for or represent agencies that can be seen as music production entities that fill some of the gap created by the absence of conventional music production companies. These include recording studios, radio stations, cultural associations, wedding and concert halls, and event planning and management agencies. 90% of those working or representing such entities stated that they work full-time, while 10% (one person) said that they have another job as well. As for the age distribution, we found that the largest age range (50%) in the sample is between the ages of 30 and 40, while 30% were between 40 and 50 years, and 20% was over the age of 50. It is interesting to note that 60% of the respondents had an educational attainment level at the secondary level or lower, while 40% were university students, half of whom work in fields related to the arts.

Most of the respondents (90%) stated that organizing musical events is their main activity, with 40% of them worked in recording these performances and sharing them online. As for professionally recording music and songs, it is done in only two locations: the relatively modern SoundPro Studio and the Al-Manahil Studio, which has produced more than a thousand musical albums since the 1990s. 60% of those surveyed work under registered entities and 40% work in an individual capacity. On the economic front, we found it difficult to obtain detailed answers, as 50% of those taking part opted not to answer questions related to their finances or the monthly income they earn working in music production. From the responses of the other half, we found that event planning agencies invest around \$20,000 of capital and assets into their work. As for local radio stations, that figure rises to \$70,000 (in total, not for music production alone). 50% of the respondents said their monthly income ranged between \$300 and \$2,000.



*Audience in the dilapidated Spring Theater during the 2021 Watar Orchestra concert - Ali Al-Baroudi*

30% of the respondents said they own the equipment they use for music production and continuously strive to maintain and upgrade them, while 70% rely on rented equipment, usually from Mosul or Erbil. Equipment costs range from \$50,000, which are borne by local radio stations, around \$20,000 for recording studios, to as little as \$300 in the case of concert venues. Most of those working in music production (80%) use online platforms to distribute their work. They post their recordings on their YouTube channels and then share the link through Facebook, and some also share them on Instagram to broaden the recordings' reach. 60% of those who publish and distribute online said they do so themselves, with no need for technical assistance, while 40% said they need technical assistance. The number of recordings shared online varies, with the highest being 500 and 50 the lowest. Online views also vary greatly, ranging from 7,000



and 100,000 views. In terms of musical content, the produced works varied substantially, but traditional and popular music constitutes most of the works being produced and published; then comes, with a much lower number of works, classical and contemporary Western music.

Regarding their music production history, 40% of those surveyed said they started working in music production after the city was liberated from ISIS in 2017, while 60% said that they had worked in this field before 2014, and a third of this group (20%) continued to work in music production when ISIS was occupying Mosul. One of the respondents was forced to close his studio (Friends Studio) and suspend operations after ISIS militants destroyed the studio and his financial situation did not allow him to return it to work. Most of these producers (80%) rely on their own financial resources for music production, and few (20%) have experience in cooperating with international organizations that fund music production.

It is also worth mentioning other forms of music production, such as festivals, in which a large number of musicians can participate. These include the Peace Festival, which is now held annually on the International Day of Peace and attracts a wide audience.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup>Peace Festival Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/lq4peace/posts/1650935644918713>.

#### 4- Music-related professions:

We found similarities between the participants in the research sample who work in music production and those working in professions related to music, such as the sale, repair, and rental of musical instruments and sound and theater equipment because many work in the two fields. The sample included five individuals who work primarily in the sale and maintenance of musical instruments in addition to their work in music or other professions. 40% of them are between 20 and 30 years of age, and the rest are equally distributed among the remaining age groups. As in the case of music production professionals, where we found that 60% have secondary education or below, while 40% have attained a university education.

60% of those surveyed in this study said that they work in an individual capacity, while 40% work within a legally registered entity. The capital invested in this type of business ranges from \$6,000 to \$20,000, and the tools and equipment they need to work in instrument repair and rental cost between \$100 and \$5,000. Most of those surveyed (80%) use the Internet to advertise their work and publish ads whose views reach 2,000 and 5,000 views.

More than half of the respondents began working in this field before 2014. 20% continued to work when ISIS governed the city, while 40% began working in this field after 2017. All of them reside in the city of Mosul, work in this field, and have concluded contracts with various government agencies like the army, the police, and the municipality, in addition to providing instrument repair services to individual musicians.

#### 5- Music-related social practices:

Like all other societies in the Arab region, the Mosul community practices rituals and traditions on social occasions such as marriage, death, birth, religious occasions, or those tied to agriculture or trade. Many of these rituals and traditions include music or songs passed down through generations. We can also assume that such rituals and traditions were more diverse in the past than they are today, considering the religious and ethnic diversity of the Mosul community at the time which no longer exists. In the field research, we attempted to monitor some musical social practices that have survived until today, and learn how individuals and the community relate to these rituals and their perspectives on them. The field research team could not reach anyone who practices these rituals except for those affiliated with religious occasions –specifically religious chants or *anashid*.

The research sample included 10 individuals who, while interested in music, are not seeking professional careers in music. Their ages varied between 20 and 30 (20%), 30 and 40 (20%), 40 and 50 (30%), and over 50 (30%). Those with university degrees made up 60% of the sample in this category, while 10% hold post-graduate degrees. The rest (30 %) have educational attainment at the secondary level or below. Most of those surveyed participate in religious chants and recitation sessions which are usually held in homes once or more per week in the

presence of approximately 20 people, or in public places on religious occasions such as the Prophet's birthday –which are attended by hundreds. From the responses of those surveyed, we can conclude that the number of religious chant sessions exceeds 100 per year and that they are attended by an audience of at least two thousand people. 50% of those surveyed said that they consider themselves experts, while 30% said that they practice religious chants for enjoyment and learning. Some of them said that other members of their families engage in the same hobby. 70% of the research sample stated that they do not mind being filmed in these sessions or having the video recordings published, while 30% said that they would not allow this because they occupy public or academic positions.

70% of the respondents continued to practice religious chanting in their homes or private places during ISIS control of the city of Mosul. Meanwhile, 30% ceased this hobby completely, due to their reputations as music lovers in the city and the fact that their continued practice of music would expose them to persecution by ISIS. After the liberation of Mosul, religious chanting became the most popular genre of music in the city.

## The Music Scene in Mosul at Present<sup>36</sup>

After a brief pause in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic that slowed its revitalization, the music scene in Mosul regained its vitality by the end of this year and in early 2021. Folk and traditional ensembles began playing at weddings again, and towards the end of 2020, two concerts were organized by Action for Hope in old Mosul. Then, during the visit of Pope Francis to Mosul in early March 2021, a concert inaugurating the return of musical activity to normalcy in the city was held in Al-Tahira Church. The Watar Orchestra's April concert in the Spring Theater proved to be the most prominent of all public events held during that period, and was also the first major civic music initiative sponsored by a for-profit organization, Radio Al-Ghad, as done elsewhere around the world. This concert was followed by the launch of the second phase of the Listening to Iraq project, led by Action for Hope, as more than 20 young musicians were trained in traditional and folk music. This phase is expected to result in the formation of 3 to 4 small ensembles that play high quality music.

However, the city's music scene in the city lacks continuity and there are no long-term music development plans, with the funding opportunities needed to implement them. The most significant obstacles to the development of this scene are the challenges facing music production including issues with investment and infrastructure as well as societal challenges which have not been resolved –although they have subsided. The following is part of the picture of the musical landscape in Mosul, and it is partial due to the lack of reliable information sources. Thus, the names we are presenting here are only given as examples:



*Commemorative postage stamp for the tenth anniversary of the Spring Festival*

- **Festivals:** Festivals play a significant role in bridging the gaps left by weak and infrequent music production, as they constitute a focal point in which creators, performers, and audiences meet, as well as providing artists with opportunities to work and develop. Here are some of the festivals that have been held in Mosul since 2014:
  - **Spring Festival:** This historic festival resumed in May 2018, ten months after the city was declared liberated from ISIS. It was held on the Eastern (left) side of the city and included parade processions and musical and folkloric performances. Attendance was limited, with relatively few citizens there alongside military and security leaders, as fears of terrorist attacks had not yet been totally assuaged. The festival was not repeated after this date, as the painful accident of the Ahlia

<sup>36</sup> A large part of this chapter is based on the observations of the research supervisor, and the Action for Hope team, in Mosul during the years 2019-2021, in addition to some information derived from the field research.



river ferry sinking meant that it had to be canceled the following year, and the Covid-19 pandemic made holding it in 2020 impossible.

- **Peace Festival:** Since its successful launch in October 2017, the festival has been held on the International Day of Peace in October every year and was suspended only as the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020. This festival has political and social undertones, and many bands and folklore troupes from all over Nineveh governorate participate in it. It is also credited with introducing audiences to some young troupes, such as the troupe *Baghdida*. The festival, which draws thousands from the city of Mosul and the areas around it, is free of charge and held in open public places like the Al-Shuhada Park and Al Ghabat (Mosul Woods).<sup>37</sup>
- **The first Mosul festival for reading:** This festival was held on 6/9/2017 near the burned central library at the University of Mosul. The purpose of this festival was to collect books for the central library and distribute them to attendees free of charge to encourage reading. The festival collected nearly 16 thousand books.
- **Iraqi Song Festival:** The festival was held exceptionally in the city of Mosul in 2018 at the stadium of Mosul University, and many Iraqi bands and famous singers participated in it.<sup>38</sup>
- **Mosul Book Fair of 2019:** The Book Forum organized a book fair in 2019, which included many musical events paying homage to the city heritage.
- **We Meet in Najafi Festival:** With support from UNESCO, this festival was organized by the Book Forum in October 2019, in Najafi Street on the right (Western) side of Mosul. This is a location with historical value that had hosted many printing presses, publishing houses, and bookstores but was completely destroyed in the war.
- **Non-profit entities:**
  - **Qantara Cultural Cafe:** Qantara Cafe opened in March 2018. It is located in the cultural group area on the left (Eastern) side of the city. It contains a library, a heritage gallery, and a cafe that is also used as a venue for cultural events. Qantara has hosted many poetry recitals, literary seminars, and concerts over the past three years.<sup>39</sup> Qantara Cafe is currently struggling financially and, consequently, might be forced to shut down.
  - **The Book Forum:** The forum was established in December 2017, a few months after the city was liberated from ISIS, and it is the first place of its kind in the city after the liberation. The forum functions as a cultural cafe that presents a diverse

<sup>37</sup> The Peace Festival's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Iq4peace/posts/4778284862183760>.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Rasheed TV's coverage of the Festival: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8\\_U34Q4pbY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8_U34Q4pbY).

<sup>39</sup> Qantara Cultural Cafe, Facebook page: [https://www.facebook.com/Qantara.Cultural.Cafe/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/Qantara.Cultural.Cafe/about/?ref=page_internal)

cultural program throughout the year. It organized the first Mosul Book Fair in October 2020, which included concerts<sup>40</sup>. It has recently been turned into a civic non-profit organization called the Book Forum for Culture and Education.

- **Baytna Institution for Culture, Heritage and Arts:** It is located in one of the heritage houses near Al-Nuri Mosque.
- **The Station Foundation for Entrepreneurship:** The Mosul branch of The Station opened in 2020. It houses a cafe, a library, a gallery, and spaces for musicians to practice and record their music. The foundation's general aim is to empower Iraqi youths and build their entrepreneurial skills, as well as broadening the reach of culture and arts.<sup>41</sup>
- **For profit NGOs:**
  - **Radio Al-Ghad:** A local radio station that was established in March 2017, a few months after the city was liberated, and it is broadcast on FM waves in the city of Mosul and Nineveh Governorate. Radio Al-Ghad does not offer music programs, but it was the main sponsor of the Watar Orchestra, which performed its first concert in April 2021.
  - **Radio One FM:** A local radio station established after the city was liberated from ISIS in 2017 and is broadcast on FM waves in the city of Mosul and Nineveh Governorate. It does not have music programs either, with the exception of the few songs played in variety programs. The radio station's offices house a café where concerts are held from time to time.
  - **Sound Pro Studio:** A well-equipped studio founded in 2017 by Mohamed Saleh, who is also the director of Radio Al-Ghad.
  - **Al Manahil Studio:** This studio was founded in the 1990s and has produced more than a thousand musical albums since. A new headquarters was opened in the cultural group area on the left (Eastern) side of the city in 2017.
  - **Banquet and wedding halls:** Over the past four years, many banquet and wedding halls, such as the Royal Palace Hall, the Princesses' Palace Hall, and other venues in Al Ghabat (Mosul Woods), have opened. All these venues are rented for private events and do not organize their own performances.
  - **Musicians' management offices:** Currently, there are many offices that handle the business side for musicians such as the offices of Abdel Aziz Waad, Al Aseel, and others.
  - **Al Rabia Recordings:** Located in Al Dawassa area, the office sells music records, and it is playing a crucial role in the effort to preserve the city's musical heritage.

<sup>40</sup> The Book Forum, Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BookForumMosul>

<sup>41</sup> The Station Foundation for Entrepreneurship: <https://the-station.iq/about?lang=en>.

- **International Organizations**

- **The British Council:** Through its Baghdad office, the British Council supports a few music events such as the Peace Festival. It also supports this study and activities related to it through its Cultural Protection Fund.
- **The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):** UNESCO supports several cultural activities through its initiative Revive the Spirit of Mosul and plays a major role in enriching the cultural scene in Mosul and Basra, such as the Listening to Iraq project organized by Action for Hope.
- **French Cultural Institute – Mosul:** This institute is located in the University of Mosul and hosted several cultural activities in the past.
- **Goethe Institute:** It supports some cultural activities, by, for example, training young women writers in Mosul.
- **Art for Peace Foundation:** This institution is linked to Karim Wasfi, who was mentioned earlier in this study. However, we could not find out more about what it does besides organizing concerts he held in Mosul.
- **USAID:** The agency funds music events in Mosul, such as the Peace Festival, Karim Wasfi concerts, and others.
- **Action for Hope:** Action for Hope leads the Listening to Iraq project with support from UNESCO. The project seeks to protect and revive traditional music in Nineveh through promoting research, rehearsal, and performance. It is also conducting this study on the impact of armed conflicts on music - taking Mosul as an example- with the support of the Cultural Protection Fund – The British Council.

- **Musicians, music teachers, and bands (this list is not an exhaustive list and only includes examples from among the city's many artists, arranged alphabetically):**

- Ehsan Akram Habib - violinist and music teacher
- Ahmed Abdel Moneim (Ahmed Dana Al Sagheer) - percussionist
- Osama Al-Diri – Violinist
- Akram Habib - Oud player, music teacher, and singer
- Ameen Mokdad - violinist
- Ayman Ahmed Younes - keyboard player
- Ban Hazem Shakib - Music teacher
- Tahsin Haddad - singer and head of the Iraqi Artist Syndicate- Nineveh Branch
- Khaled Al-Khalidi - singer
- Khaled Al-Rawi - Oud player
- Rabea Namir Fadel - music teacher

- Rabie Malallah Shukr - singer
- Shoaib Bashar Hashem - reciter of religious chants
- Talal Al-Shamali - violinist and president of the Iraqi Musicians Association
- Daher Hajji Munif - singer
- Amer Younes - singer and member of the Mullah Uthman Al-Mosili band
- Abdullah Al-Asmar - singer
- Abdul Rahman Hammadi Salem - singer
- Ali Nazim - music teacher
- Ghazi Salem Mohamed - keyboard player al Jameelah - music department
- Fahad Hanash Shalekh - Rababa player
- Fanar Adnan Al-Taei - reciter of religious chants
- Laith Asaad Gha'eb - reciter of religious chants
- Maher Al-Qattan - Oud player, singer, and teacher at the Institute of Fine Arts, Department of Music
- Mohamed Al-Aseel - singer
- Mohammed Al-Adwani – violinist
- Mohamed Al-Rahhal - singer
- Muhammad Al-Radhi – guitar player
- Mohamed Al-Fahad - keyboardist
- Mohamed Zaki - singer
- Muhammad Salem Sheit - reciter of religious chants
- Mohamed Fadel Mohamed (Mohamed Dana) - percussionist
- Mohamed Mahmoud - violinist and conductor of Watar Orchestra
- Mahmoud Adel Mahmoud - keyboardist
- Mostafa Mohamed Ragab - percussionist
- Mosab Ihsan Abdel Mohsen - music teacher
- Mokdad Abdullah Al-Abadi - reciter of religious chants
- Moamen Al Qatari - percussionist
- Nabil Al-Atrakji - guitarist and music teacher
- Nabil El Shaar - Qanun player and teacher at the Institute of Fine Arts
- Nawar Ibrahim - young singer

- Hashem Miqdad – clarinet player
- Hani Abdullah Mahmoud - music teacher
- Walid Said - reciter of religious chants
- Yassin Muhammad Al-Faisal - reciter of religious chants
- Younis Al-Kunni - reciter of religious chants
- **Ensembles:**
  - Light Orchestra: Led by Ameen Mokdad
  - Watar Orchestra: Conducted by Mohamed Mahmoud
  - Taraneem Al Hadbaa: an ensemble that performs religious chants or *anashid*
  - Eyal Al-Aseel Ensemble: a percussion group
  - Ma Ba'd Azzalam (After Darkness) Ensemble: a musical theater troupe
  - The Mullah Uthman Al-Mosuli Ensemble: specializes in the Mosul and oriental heritage
  - Om Al Rabi'en Ensemble: a group under the auspices of the Artists Syndicate



## Research Conclusions

### 1- The Professional and Organizational Status of Musicians:

Most musicians in Mosul, whose number ranges between 150 and 500, are members of the Artists Syndicate or the Musicians Association. However, membership does not grant them any privileges, neither professionally nor financially. Musicians have no social security, neither at retirement age nor in cases of disability or death. They have no legal protection from abuses they may face due to their work in music. Musicians often work professionally and are paid for their work, and many of them depend entirely on the income generated from music for their livelihoods. Yet, there is no official minimum wage, nor are there contractual regulations that safeguards their rights. For example, none of the musicians and owners of music production agencies whose musical instruments, equipment, and workplaces were destroyed by ISIS received any compensation from the government. Even the families of musicians killed by ISIS received no compensation. This massive social protection gap constitutes a major obstacle to young people taking up occupations in music and professions tied to it.



*Artists Syndicate H! - Ninawa*

The practical differences between membership in the Artists Syndicate and the Musicians Association are unclear. However, the latter seems to include a greater number of folk musicians while the former contains musicians working in traditional oriental music and Western music. The Syndicate is also officially affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, and today, it has 287 members paying conscription fees.<sup>42</sup> The Musicians Association differentiates between active members, who have qualifications from arts institutes, and associate members who are practitioners of music

and could become active members after three years as associates. Neither the Syndicate nor the Association organizes large musical events, but the Syndicate has an ensemble that performs concerts on occasions.

There is an obvious need for more active engagement by the Artists Syndicate and the Musicians Association and for them to acquire the skills and financial resources necessary for each to play its role in providing social protection and social services for musicians and their families, in addition to providing workers in music creation and performance with professional support. This must be achieved without that role developing into censorship or guardianship of musicians or these bodies becoming biased in favor of particular musical trends. There is also a need to find

---

<sup>42</sup> According to the interview that Nahidh al-Ramadani conducted with the chairman of the Iraqi Artists Syndicate, Tahseen Haddad, found in Appendix 4.

an organizational structure for workers in music-related professions, such as the sale and repair of musical instruments, the sale and rental of audio equipment, and music production. Such a structure would defend the interests of those engaged in said professions and demand the needed legal and financial facilities.

In Iraqi law, there are clear provisions for protecting the material and moral rights of musicians, such as the Author Protection Law No. 3 of 1971, as amended by Order No. 83 of 2004<sup>43</sup> and issued by the Coalition Provisional Authority. Nonetheless, Iraq has not ratified the agreements of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)<sup>44</sup> on musicians' public performance rights, such as the 2012 Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances, the 1996 WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty, or the 1961 Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations. Perhaps the fact that it is not party to these international agreements is the main reason for the lack of clear legal and practical mechanisms for protecting the rights of musicians in Iraq. The only body concerned with this matter is the National Center for Intellectual Property Rights which is affiliated with the Ministry of Culture. Authors can register their works at the Center, but it is not responsible for collecting or securing their financial rights. If such mechanisms were in place, securing financial resources for musicians would become feasible in the long term, especially considering the good number of radio and television stations in the city.

At the level of music appreciation and culture, Mosul lacks an institutional structure dedicated to playing music as a hobby, providing education and instruction to those interested, or offering training opportunities that may encourage some to pursue careers in music. Currently, this role is played by a few civil society actors such as The Station and the Book Forum, but the interests of these organizations are spread across many issues and they have limited human and financial resources. Currently, music is appreciated and critiqued among small groups on social media but this is insufficient to meet the actual needs for music training, knowledge and talent exposure of Mosul residents of both sexes.

## 2- Music Education

Music education in Mosul is fraught with gaps, constraining the musical scene, stifling its diversity, and limiting its reach in the city and beyond. At the level of basic education, one class per week is, in theory, dedicated to arts. However, it is rarely used to teach music, as most schools have no music teachers, and musical instruments are scarce. Moreover, there are no theaters or halls for musical performances in public schools, which are already suffering from a spike in the number of students relative to the number of available buildings. It is unclear what role the Music Department, which is entrusted with promoting music education in schools and

---

<sup>43</sup> Despite the mention of related rights in Article 34, the name of the law was not amended to include those rights. The text of the amendment (Arabic): <http://wiki.dorar-aliraq.net/iraqilaws/law/16419.html>.

<sup>44</sup> International Organization for the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights: <https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/>.

holding summer courses for talented students, currently plays in managing music activities in public schools. Some private schools try to give attention to music education in their curricula, but this is available only to a limited number of students. In addition to its role in educating students, music education in schools sharpens the senses of students and expands their imagination, making for a generation that is appreciative and socially accepting of music. The current gap in music education may leave future generations deprived of the ability to appreciate and understand music.

At the level of intermediate education, the music departments of the Institutes of Fine Arts for boys and girls are qualifying music teachers after a five-year study. Few graduates of the two institutes actually teach music, which may be the result of decreased demand for music tutors because it is overlooked in basic education. Raad Raytham al-Husseini, director of the Institute of Fine Arts for Boys, says that in 2019, there were 750 applicants to the Institute across all departments, 886 applicants in 2020, and only 403 applicants in 2021. This substantial decrease may be attributed to the Ministry of Education's instructions that only applicants who had passed the ninth grade in the first round can be accepted. 125 students are accepted annually, with the expectation of 2010, when there was an expansion and 150 students were accepted. The music department accepts 25 students, and the remaining students are distributed among the other departments. Regarding the Institute of Fine Arts for Girls, Haifa Sabah, the Institute's assistant dean of student affairs, says 600 students applied in 2019, 800 applied in 2020, but, in 2021, only 300 students applied to the Institute because passing the ninth grade in the first was a prerequisite for admission. Only 20 students will be accepted into the music department this year after passing their entrance exams.

The curricula in these institutes have been set by the Ministry of Education, but the ministry has not altered or developed them for decades. The two Institutes do not have enough musical instruments for students either, nor do they have a sufficient number of halls suitable for rehearsals and performances. The University of Mosul hosts the Institute of Fine Arts for Girls, but it has no academic ties with the Institute, as it is affiliated with the Ministry of Education.

There is no music education at the university level in Mosul. The reason for this is rumored to be that there are no academic professors qualified to establish a music college or department. But how can such professors emerge when music is not taught at the university level? This gap holds the music scene in Mosul back in several ways. First, young people with musical talent might give up on careers in music due to their preoccupation with other academic disciplines that may be less suited to them. Those who are musically talented, and who are serious about taking up music professionally, have to rely on themselves, on online resources and the few music teachers who offer private lessons in Mosul. This leads to a general atmosphere that is disrespectful and dismissive of the field, as it implies that music is not an academic discipline worth studying and reinforces the perception that music is dispensable.

This bleak picture of music in Mosul is further darkened by the fact that there are no music libraries or archives that contain the works Mosul musicians have made over the years. Moreover, the University of Mosul pays no attention to archiving music in its library or incorporating music into social activities, and its interest in music is limited to organizing and hosting occasional concerts.<sup>45</sup>

There are some NGOs that provide training or alternative music education, such as the Tamkeen Association, the Ataa Association for People with Special Needs, the Happy Childhood Association, and Action for Hope. To varying degrees, these initiatives provide children and youth with opportunities that they wouldn't have had access to otherwise, paving the way for new talents and cultivating interest in music. There is a need to develop and sustain these programs and to direct them towards the musically talented so that they acquire the skills and knowledge needed to become professional musicians or at least skilled hobbyists. These initiatives represent a parallel and complementary path to formal music education and may constitute an alternative if providing decent formal music education on a large scale remains difficult.

---

<sup>45</sup> For example, this event was organized by the French/Iraqi Cultural Center at the University of Mosul: <https://www.uomosul.edu.ig/news/ar/basicEducation/54237>.

### 3- Music Production Infrastructure:

#### Music performance venues:

Currently, there are no concert halls in Mosul besides those typically used for weddings. The few venues that existed before the ISIS takeover of Mosul were either completely destroyed by aerial bombardment, such as the Iraqi Maqam House and the Workers' Theater, or they suffered great damage and require comprehensive rehabilitation, such as the Spring Theater and Ibn Al-Atheer Theater. While there are halls often used for concerts in The Station, the Book Forum, and Radio One FM, these halls are not designed for



*Concert by Watar Orchestra in the dilapidated Spring Theater 2021  
– Ahmad Balla*

concerts and therefore do not meet the required technical conditions in terms of stage visibility and acoustics, and they can only accommodate small audiences. As a result, larger concerts only take place in the Mosul University Theater, which is currently under restoration, as well as the University stadium and in archeological sites that can be used to host larger audiences. However, these venues require a great deal of preparation before each concert, and none of them have an equipped open-air theater despite the fact that the climate in Mosul allows for open-air concerts seven or eight months annually.

Given the lack of mechanisms to secure and collect musicians' financial rights from their public performances and the costs and difficulties of professional music production, concerts remain the primary source of income for most musicians, and the current scarcity of music venues has impoverished many of them.

From a community perspective, the lack of venues designated for music performances undermines music appreciation and community acceptance of musicianship, limiting these sentiments to the few attendees at the concerts held on occasion.

#### Technical equipment:

There are very few companies working in the field of technical event preparation in Mosul – perhaps only one or two companies. This also applies to theater stage equipment, lighting units, and the video equipment often used in concerts.



Although there are a number of projects to launch recording studios, including some commercial projects and others within NGO programs, there are only three or four fully equipped studios in the city that has a population of nearly four million.

#### **Musical instruments:**

The instruments used by Mosul musicians seem to be limited to no more than ten different instruments. This is a natural outcome of the gaps in music education and the lack of exposure to the music scene in the region and the world. Despite the narrow range of instruments used, they are still difficult to procure from inside the city because of the scarcity of shops selling musical instruments. It is also difficult to obtain musical instruments supplies and accessories such as strings, keys, mouthpieces, etc. and musicians need to purchase these instruments and supplies from Erbil or Baghdad or order them online from outside Iraq. Establishing stores to sell musical instruments may be the most profitable form of music-related business, as there is increased demand for them, and enough residents have the purchasing power to acquire them. Unfortunately, those whose music shops were destroyed by ISIS have not received compensation allowing them to reopen after the liberation of Mosul although such compensation would not have burdened government budgets due to the small size of investment capital in these shops.

#### **Skills and knowledge needed for music production:**

This is one of the weakest links in the music production process, as successive wars and conflicts have led to the migration of many experts and virtuosos. They have also decreased training and networking opportunities that enhance technical sound engineering skills for indoor and outdoor concerts, as well as sound design and engineering for audiovisual studio productions. Although local radio stations have contributed to developing some of these skills, this remains limited to a very small number of technicians who work in these radio stations. On the positive side, ongoing and major technological developments in audio engineering have reduced the investment cost associated with this field, as audio engineers can use relatively cheap software programs that can run on personal computers. This development provides an opportunity for a new generation of audio engineers in Mosul who need only to have relevant technical skills and fluency in English.

Most musicians use social media to share their work, and a few have their own YouTube channels. However, this is not done within the framework of a marketing strategy or plan. Moreover, their production are often lacking in terms of visual and audio quality and aesthetics. Generally, there are very few marketing professionals working in music, and therefore, it is difficult to find promotional campaigns for bands or musical products besides the basic advertisements promoting concerts, which are not particularly creative and do not target a specific audience.

Given the lack of a cultural policy, at both the national and local levels, aimed at supporting and developing cultural industries, those working in music production in Mosul need to develop their capacities in the field of founding and managing small- and medium-sized cultural enterprises, as they have to strike a balance between the business side of things and their role in supporting

Mosul's local economy. There is an evident need for drafting a local cultural policy that is aligned with the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.<sup>46</sup> Such a policy would facilitate and support the establishment of small cultural entities, including companies working in music production and the manufacture of musical instruments.

### Investment in music production:

Although there are no statistics on the rate of investment in Mosul, cursory observation shows a significant increase in the number of commercial centers, shops, restaurants, and cafes in the city over the past three years. This shift is evident in the Al Ghabat (Mosul Woods) area that was a touristic destination a long time ago, where the number of wedding halls and entertainment venues has recently increased. This area was the scene of battles between



*Sama'a concert at Khan Al-Komrk - December 2021 -  
Photo by Maan Al-Hasbani*

ISIS and the Iraqi military only a few years ago. Such changes could qualify the city to become a tourist destination for Iraqis from the central and southern governorates.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, in its session held in Nineveh in August 2021, the Iraqi Council of Ministers released frozen accounts in Nineveh Governorate,<sup>48</sup> and part of these funds could be used to revitalize tourism as part of Mosul's reconstruction plans.

This apparent wave of investment in the consumer and tourism economy has not yet been accompanied by small or medium investments in industries related to music, and the very few such investments that have been made over the past years were individual investments, not investments by the state, large companies, or banks from Mosul or outside. There is no clear explanation for the reluctance to invest in music production besides the obscurity of expected returns on investment in light of major discrepancies in the enforcement of laws protecting the rights of musicians and music producers.

In terms of producing and recording music, there are few examples of recordings by musicians from Mosul being produced during the past four years and achieving some degree of popularity, such as those of Muhammad Zaki. However, the general rule remains that investment returns on music recordings do not cover their costs for the aforementioned reasons.

<sup>46</sup> UNESCO, The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005, link: <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention>.

<sup>47</sup> Tom Westcott, "Iraq: Mosul rebrands as domestic tourist destination," Middle East Eye, 7 November 2021, link: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraq-mosul-tourism-rebrand-islamic-state>.

<sup>48</sup> Government of Iraq, "During its session in Nineveh, the Council of Ministers releases the frozen assets of the governorate," press release, Government of Iraq Official Website, 17 Aug 2021, link: <https://gds.gov.iq/during-its-session-in-nineveh-the-council-of-ministers-releases-the-frozen-assets-of-the-governorate>.

The norm also seems to be that concerts are provided free of charge, and it would be difficult, at least at the beginning, to persuade audiences to pay for concert tickets, since concerts are not yet considered by the community to be important social activities. On the other hand, with the exception of Radio El Ghad's sponsorship of the Watar Orchestra, there are no other examples of commercial entities sponsoring musical activity as part of their promotional or social responsibility programs.

On a more comprehensive level, the banking restrictions that have been imposed on the transfer of funds to and from Mosul as part of counter-terrorism policies since 2014 seem to hinder investment in the city in general,<sup>49</sup> including investment in music production. They also constrain civil society organizations, including those that provide cultural and artistic programs like concerts. At the moment, most business owners and civil society organizations operating in Mosul have to channel the funds they need in cash in Mosul through bank accounts in Erbil or Baghdad.<sup>50</sup> This is in the event that they can open such accounts, as they require that the entity has headquarters in either Erbil or Baghdad. In a recent positive development, the Iraqi Council of Ministers decided, during its session held in Mosul in August 2021, to allow banking companies to submit applications to work in the Nineveh Governorate, provided that these applications are decided upon within 30 days.<sup>51</sup> This development will contribute to making the cash liquidity needed for small projects and civil society activities more available.

Finally, the extremely slow pace of Mosul's reconstruction and the rehabilitation of its infrastructure necessary for normal life does not help the revitalization of cultural life or encourage investment in music production. Four years after the defeat of ISIS, most parts of old Mosul on the Western side of the city remain destroyed. The effects of destruction have not been erased, and streets have not been opened, paved, or lit beyond a minimal level. Furthermore, the Mosul airport is still not operational, and the city still lacks hotels that meet international standards, all of which would support investment in the city and facilitate holding of festivals and music events in it. It is hoped that, after the decisions made during the Council of Ministers' August 2021 meeting, that we will see serious efforts aimed at filling all of these gaps.<sup>52</sup>

### **Community attitudes towards music:**

The Mosul community is often referred to as "conservative," which can mean adherence to entrenched norms and traditions as well as social values associated with past historical eras. This

---

<sup>49</sup> Alaa Hussain, "Ninawa banks seek permission to resume business," Diyaruna, 16 January 2020, link: [https://diyaruna.com/en\\_GB/articles/cnmi/di/features/2020/01/16/feature-01](https://diyaruna.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi/di/features/2020/01/16/feature-01).

<sup>50</sup> Al-Jazeera, "How is Mosul Circumventing Restrictions on Cash Transfers?" (Arabic), 5 November 2018, link: <https://bit.ly/3KCRIPH>.

<sup>51</sup> Euphrates News, "Council of Ministers Votes on 23 Orders Related to Nineveh" (Arabic), 16 August 2021, link: <https://bit.ly/3H1rDlr>.

<sup>52</sup> For example: Cabinet decision regarding The Oberoi Hotel: <http://cabinet.iq/ArticleShow.aspx?ID=11558>.

has negative implications as it renders society apprehensive towards the changes necessitated by history. However, it also has positive implications, as it means that the community preserves and cherishes its cultural heritage. It is also important to note that many intellectuals, artists, and academics take great pride in Mosul's musical history and frequently praise Mullah Uthman Al-Mosuli, one of the most pivotal composers in the history of oriental music. However, this pride does not manifest itself in the society embracing the art of music, and recognizing musicians as respectable members of the society, especially after the period of ISIS rule. Until today, most Mosuli families do not approve of musicians and consider them less qualified than other professionals<sup>53</sup> even if they earn large sums of money. We also found out that some amateur musicians refuse to participate in public concerts or to be filmed during private musical sessions for fear of defamation.<sup>54</sup> This view of music creates psychological and social obstacles impeding the paths of musically talented youths seeking to learn and practice music.

Community attitudes towards musicians are no different from how society sees artists in general. The practice of all forms of art has not been established as a respected profession in the Mosuli society, where art is considered a hobby at best. We note here that literature is in a category of its own in terms of public respect, as it does not require performing in public and is closely linked to the Arabic language, which most people revere. There is a need for communal dialogue about the different roles that art can play in society and its importance. Neglect of the role of art necessarily leads to the marginalization of artists, the marginalization of cultural projects and institutions, and reducing their funding.

Also, the current state of cultural diversity in Mosul may be contributing to the marginalization of the arts and the negative perception of music. Sectarian conflicts that followed the American invasion, and then the broad influence that Al-Qaeda enjoyed in this part of the country, which culminated in ISIS rule, have caused the forcible displacement of most residents of sects other than Sunni Islam. The presence of minorities and their various cultures had allowed for spaces of freedom of expression in the city, as it made practicing diverse rituals and living divergent lifestyles possible. Even after security has returned to Mosul, the city is no longer as diverse as it had once been, and difference is frowned upon. In terms of music, this relatively new demographic situation has led to a decrease in the diversity of musical colors common among Mosul musicians. We found that Mosuli *muwashahat* and *tanzilat* are widespread, while the prevalence of the musical styles of minorities such as Kurds, Turkmen, Roma peoples, Assyrians and others have greatly diminished, as well as modern music, regardless of the genre.

---

<sup>53</sup> A musician mentioned to the research editor that most families refuse to marry off their daughters to musicians.

<sup>54</sup> According to what Fahd Sabah, founder of the Book Forum in Mosul, stated.

Despite this, all the field research respondents said that the Mosul community's attitude towards music has changed positively, as demonstrated by the steady increase of concert attendances in the city, as well as the annual increase in the number of applicants to fine arts institutes, including music departments.<sup>55</sup> This positive change is undoubtedly real, but consolidating this as a social value requires diligent institutional and media work.



*Audience at Wessal concert at Khan Hamu Al-Qadu 2020 - Photo by Maan Al-Hasbani*

### **Status of women in the music landscape:**

Although the Iraqi constitution stipulate that citizens are equal regardless of gender<sup>56</sup> and while Iraq ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1986, the state still has reservations on four key articles of the Convention.<sup>57</sup> This has meant the Iraqi government's abstention from amending laws that clearly discriminate against women, such as personal status laws and others. An observer of the various avenues of public life in Iraq cannot but notice how marginal the role of women is,<sup>58</sup> despite the tireless efforts of a small number of civil society organizations and feminist activists and the progress that their initiatives have achieved, particularly at the level of women's political participation.<sup>59</sup>

As in other Arab countries, women are viewed as an insignificant group in society in terms of their social, economic and cultural rights, rather than considering those to be the rights of half of all the citizenry and hence society as a whole. In 2021, the number of women in Nineveh Governorate was estimated to be about 1,980,000, or about 49.5% of the total population of the governorate. This estimate is based on census data from the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) within the Ministry of Planning on the population of Nineveh in 2019, the annual

<sup>55</sup> The number of applicants decreased after placing the condition that the applicant must succeed in the first round at the ninth grade.

<sup>56</sup> Article 19(a) of the Iraqi Constitution of 1970.

<sup>57</sup> Valeria Vilaro and Sara Bittar, Gender Profile –Iraq: A situation analysis on gender equality and women's empowerment in Iraq, Research Report, UN Women in cooperation with Oxfam and the Japanese government, December 2018, p. 9, link: <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620602/rr-gender-profile-iraq-131218-en.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> For a comprehensive and detailed picture of the situation of women in Iraq, it is recommended to read the ESCWA report issued in 2009 from pages 44 to 64: [https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/ecw-09-3-a\\_0.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/ecw-09-3-a_0.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> Report of UN Women in cooperation with Oxfam and the Japanese government, in English – page 23: <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620602/rr-gender-profile-iraq-131218-en.pdf>.



population growth rates, and the proportion of women of the population in Iraq.<sup>60 61</sup> If we assume that 60% of women reside in the city of Mosul, the capital of the governorate and its largest city, we can estimate that the number of women in the city of Mosul exceeds 1,185,000. In compliance with the Compulsory Education Law No. 118 of 1976, girls make 46% of all students in primary education, and this percentage subsequently drops to 40% for secondary education and 38% in vocational and university institutions. The Women and Men report, issued by the Central Statistical Organization, contains the following statement, which may explain the decline in the percentage of girls in secondary and university education: “The law gives females **the freedom** to drop out of school after that point, meaning after the age of 11 years, **according to the opinions of their guardians.**”<sup>62</sup> As for women’s participation in economic life and their share of the labor market in Mosul, we did not find clear statistics, except for press reports stating that the unemployment rate among young females in Iraq has reached 56.3%<sup>63</sup> and that women’s participation in the labor force does not exceed 13.4%.<sup>64</sup>

This lengthy introduction is needed to clarify the social and legal context surrounding women’s absence from the music scene in Mosul. In addition to all the above mentioned factors, most members of the Mosul community adhere to a conservative value system that views the practice of art as transgressing the accepted limits of morality, and regards it, at best, as inappropriate or superfluous. The community also considers women to be under the guardianship of men within the family and incapable of protecting themselves or making decisions concerning their own lives. This is not alien to most Arab societies, but it is necessary to stress that disrupting or impeding the public role of women in all walks of life hinders the development of these communities and their ability to be creative and productive.

Furthermore, there is no mention in history of music in Mosul to women who have excelled in instrumental or vocal work. Exceptions to this are the residency of singer Sultana Yusuf in Mosul for a period of time and the fact that singer Afifa Iskandar Estefan was born in Mosul. Today, however, there are a few female musicians who have been active in the music scene in Mosul since the 1990s, especially in music education. Around 150 female students are currently enrolled in the Institute of Fine Arts – Department of Music, which specializes in preparing students to become music teachers over its five-year programs.<sup>65</sup> It is also interesting to note

---

<sup>60</sup> Central Statistical Organization (CSO) website:

[http://cosit.gov.iq/ar/?option=com\\_content&view=article&layout=edit&id=1218](http://cosit.gov.iq/ar/?option=com_content&view=article&layout=edit&id=1218).

<sup>61</sup> CSO, Population Estimates in Iraq, report issued by the Directorate of Population and Labor Force Statistics for the year 2019, available (in Arabic) here: <https://bit.ly/3Aw2nSb>.

<sup>62</sup> CSO, Women and Men Report 2019: <https://bit.ly/3H1Wu1B>.

<sup>63</sup> Rudaw Agency, “Ministry of Planning: Unemployment Among Iraqi Young Men Has Reached 22.6%” (Arabic), link: <https://www.rudaw.net/arabic/middleeast/iraq/230820186>.

<sup>64</sup> Hussein Al Amel, “Researchers: Women Make 13.4% of the Labor Force in Iraq” (Arabic), Sot Al Iraq, link: <https://bit.ly/3rPOY5c>.

<sup>65</sup> According to the testimony of Nahid al-Ramadani

that very few female graduates from this institute actually work in music education. Several factors could explain this. First, these female graduates may not have the opportunity to work in the field they had specialized in due to the lack of jobs in formal education following cuts to spending on music education in public schools and the scarcity of available opportunities in private music tutoring, given that most students are male. This is further exacerbated by the society's general intolerance of women working in music.

There are no regular women musicians in the few orchestras and ensembles performing in Mosul, not even as vocalists only which is the case in similar societies. This absence can only be explained by the two societal factors mentioned earlier: first, the belief that performing music is not dignified or morally justified, and second, men's guardianship over women and restrictions to their freedom. Nonetheless, there are noteworthy changes in social attitudes towards the arts,<sup>66</sup> especially since a large percentage of the population of Mosul are youths eager for change and thirsty for freedom. As for the status of women in the music landscape, it is difficult to achieve significant change without an organized effort by civil society organizations, academic institutions, state agencies, and the media.

---

<sup>66</sup> 100% of the respondents said that there is a positive change in community attitudes towards art.

## Recommendations

The following are recommendations that the research editor and principal researcher believes to be necessary for reviving the music scene in the city of Mosul, supporting its diversity, encouraging new generations of musicians to contribute, and ensuring its social and economic sustainability. The recommendations are divided according to the research findings, and we have tried to separate those that are urgent and required in the short and medium term from those that are long term, though the two overlap to a large extent.

### Musicians:

#### In the short and medium term (one to three years):

1. Establish a clear and practical mechanism for implementing intellectual property rights and neighboring rights<sup>67</sup>, especially those concerning production and public performance. This can be done either by founding a branch of one of the international agencies that are specialized in collecting and paying dues for public performance, or by establishing a civil society organization or a government department with this mandate. This may require the issuance of executive regulations tied to the previously mentioned intellectual property laws in Iraq. This would require two years at most, and it could secure a sustainable source of income for musicians and music producers. Such a move must be initiated by the musicians themselves; it could be initiated by the Iraqi Artists Syndicate, the Musicians Association, or both.
2. Develop, organize and support the Iraqi Artists Syndicate and the Musicians Association. This can be done firstly by providing them with sufficient and regular government financial support, and secondly, by clarifying the benefits and social and professional services that both entities provide to their members. Thirdly, it can be done by training their employees and modernizing the way they operate such that it becomes aligned with the needs of musicians in the city while strengthening the role they play in protecting artistic expression and promoting musical diversity. This could be done over 3 years, ensuring that the development of these two entities is included in the Mosul reconstruction plans. This is based on the fact that music and musicians are pivotal for restoring normal life in the city. Developing these entities is also in accordance with Goal No. 11 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030, which aspires to make cities safe, receptive to diversity, vibrant and humane.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> IPRs includes the rights of authors and neighbouring rights include the rights of performers, producers and broadcasting entities

<sup>68</sup> United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal 11: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>

### **In the longer term (1-10 Years):**

1. Demand that the state implement UNESCO's 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist<sup>69</sup>. Its fourth, fifth, and sixth articles stipulate that the state should support artists educationally, socially and professionally, whether directly or by facilitating support for them by passing the appropriate legislation and ensuring that the tools needed for that legislation's implementation are available. Also, demand that, through the Ministry of Culture, the state ratifies the 2012 Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances, the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty of 1996, and the Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations of 1961 by introducing legislation ensuring that these agreements are respected. This demand could be led by the Iraqi Artists Syndicate, thereby getting all artists in Iraq involved, not only musicians in Mosul, since this is one of its most important roles. Meeting these demands can take up to five or six years, but rallying artists behind these demands and paving the ground for their realizations requires two years at most.
2. Governmental cultural bodies, international organizations, and civil society organizations working in the field of culture should offer education pathways to musicians. They should also provide opportunities for international cultural exchange and support creative musical projects through small and medium grant programs, competitions and awards, festivals and international art residencies.
3. Support bands and groups of amateur musicians by providing them with instruments and training programs, facilitating the legal procedures for registering amateur music associations, and allocating spaces where they can practice music free of charge or for a small fee.

### **Music education:**

#### **In the short and medium terms (1-3 years):**

1. Put into effect music education at the basic education level in at least 20 schools, by providing and training music teachers, providing musical instruments and allocating spaces where boys and girls can study music. The Ministry of Education has the primary responsibility for this plan, that can be implemented in 3 years, in cooperation with civil society organizations working in music. Such a plan would contribute to achieving the fourth goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which states that high-quality education must be provided to all citizens.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> UNESCO, Records of the General Conference, 21st session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980, v. 1: Resolutions, Annex I: Recommendation concerning the status of the Artist, link: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114029.page=144>.

<sup>70</sup> United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal 4, link: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>.

2. Revive the role of extracurricular school activities in discovering and nurturing the musically talented students in basic education, and enrolling them in supplementary programs to develop their skills. The Ministry of Education is also responsible here, while finding ways to persuade private companies to sponsor such activities in the city is also possible.
3. Create and support diverse alternative music education pathways that offer shortcuts to developing the skills and enhancing the knowledge of young musicians so that they can take up a career in music. This recommendation is directed at NGOs, international organizations working in culture, and the Iraqi Ministry of Culture.
4. Evaluate the music departments of the two institutes of fine arts in the city, which entails assessing: the method of application, admission requirements, curricula, teachers, equipment, instruments, and the extent to which they prepare students for the labor market. This evaluation can be carried out experimentally in Mosul, allowing all the institutes of fine arts across Iraq to benefit from it.

**In the longer term (1-10 Years):**

1. Establish an institute for musical studies like the one in Baghdad in Mosul within three years. It could be a branch of the same institute and operate according to the same founding laws.<sup>71</sup> This institute can start with one department for instrumental music, Oriental and Western. The teaching faculty could be composed of teachers from the fine arts institutes, with the help of professors from Baghdad and visiting professors from outside Iraq. Afterwards, the rest of the departments can be added over the first ten years of its establishment. This matter should be prioritized by those planning the reconstruction of the city of Mosul, as well as in international initiatives to revive and revitalize the cultural scene, such as the initiatives of UNESCO and others. This recommendation is directed at the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education.
2. Establish a school specialized in the rich and diverse traditional and folk music that distinguishes the city of Mosul and Nineveh Governorate in general. The objective of such a school would be preserving the musical heritage of the city of Mosul, the Nineveh Governorate, and the entire country through training and performance. Here, responsibility falls upon the Ministry of Culture and the civil and international associations concerned with culture and arts in the city. This project is consistent with the Iraqi state's commitment to implement the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>72</sup>.
3. Establish a music library and archive affiliated with the University of Mosul, and connected with the current institutes of fine arts, and with the Institute of Music Studies, and the School of

---

<sup>71</sup> Law establishing the Institute of Music Studies: <http://wiki.dorar-aliraq.net/iraqilaws/law/10654.html>.

<sup>72</sup> UNESCO, The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, 2003, text of the convention: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>



Traditional Music after their establishment. This can be done on the basis of a memorandum of understanding that allows students to use the materials in the library in their studies and future master's and doctoral theses. This library must be the result of a long research process and after careful collection of audio-visual and written materials, which are now mostly in the possession of individuals. This project is consistent with the commitment of the State of Iraq to implement the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage.<sup>73</sup>

4. Set up a scholarship fund that provides annual grants to study music in institutes of fine arts and in the Institute of Music Studies after its establishment to talented musicians, while giving female students priority in these grants. It is also recommended that this fund, which would be financed by the Mosul Governorate, the Ministries of Education, Higher Education and Culture, as well as international organizations, provides scholarships for students seeking to pursue their postgraduate studies outside Iraq, with female students prioritized here as well.<sup>74</sup>

## Music Production

### In the short and medium terms (1-3 years):

1. Restore and operate the Spring Theater and make it available to bands and civil society organizations in the city for a small fee. The basic structure of the theater appears to be intact, and it does not need a long time to rehabilitate, though the cost may be relatively high due to its size. The theater becoming functional would have immense symbolic social value that the city needs and should be a priority in the reconstruction plans.
2. Establish 3-4 small concert halls in the heritage buildings that are currently being rebuilt, taking acoustic and visual requirements into account. These halls must be open and available to small bands of young musicians, and the only restriction should be ensuring the preservation of these buildings' architectural value and structural integrity. This recommendation is addressed to the organizations leading and supporting the reconstruction process, as well as with the Governorate of Mosul and the Directorate of Antiquities.
3. Establish venues for concerts in Mosul's historical markets in cooperation with the city's merchants and businessmen. These sites ensure that musical activities are part of citizens' daily lives and should be available to small young bands and sponsored by those managing the markets and by the Mosul Governorate.

---

<sup>73</sup> UNESCO, The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, 2003, text of the convention: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

<sup>74</sup> The research editor believes that this preference is necessary for at least ten years to allow women to be present in the music scene, and this is consistent with the fourth objective of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on respect for human rights with a focus on gender equality

4. Establish a semi-fixed open-air venue suitable for large concerts and festivals in one of the city's rehabilitated archeological sites. Responsibility for implementing this recommendation lies with the Governorate of Mosul and the Directorate of Antiquities.
5. Lift all restrictions imposed on banking services in Mosul and facilitate bank transfers to and from music production companies in the city.
6. Develop a preliminary study on the obstacles to investing in music production in the city and propose a package to incentivize investment in this field. This recommendation is addressed to the Mosul Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with music producers.
7. Establishing a branch for artistic production in the Mosul Chamber of Commerce.
8. Hold workshops in sound engineering, the marketing of cultural products, and the management of small and medium projects for entrepreneurs in music production. The responsibility for this recommendation lies with civil society and international organizations working in arts and culture in the city.

**In the longer term (1-10 years):**

1. Rebuild the Iraqi Maqam House, Ibn al-Atheer Theater and the Workers' Theater Hall, with a plan drawn up to manage and operate these sites such that they do not turn into empty buildings.
2. Establish an investment fund to support culture in the city, prioritizing small and medium sized businesses working in music production and the manufacture and sale of musical instruments. This can be done through a joint effort by the National Investment Commission, the Ministries of Industry, Trade and Culture, the Mosul Chamber of Commerce, and the cities' banks.
3. Incorporate audio engineering and other related disciplines into the curricula of the relevant institutes and departments at the University of Mosul, thus enabling students to use their technical skills to facilitate making, performing, and teaching music in the city. The same applies to the curricula of business schools, where the promotion of cultural industries should become part of the curriculum.
4. Work to establish national and local cultural policies that support cultural industries and protect the rights of artistic producers. The responsibility for this recommendation lies with the Ministry of Culture, which should lead the process of enacting these policies in cooperation with cultural organizations, artist associations and Syndicates, and the private cultural sector.

**Music and Society:**

**In the short and medium term (one to three years):**

1. Initiate dialogue between civil society organizations in various fields, such as peacebuilding, human rights, education, environmental protection, development, culture, and arts, with a focus

on the role that arts play in supporting positive social change. This can be done through a series of seminars and panel discussions. The responsibility for this recommendation lies with the city's cultural NGOs.

2. Conduct awareness raising campaigns for youths on cultural rights as an essential part of human rights. The campaign should also seek to highlight the social and economic benefits of cultural development- how it can help in reducing unemployment, easing social tensions and building peace. The civil society organizations working in culture in the city, in cooperation with the University of Mosul and the Governorate of Mosul, can undertake this task.
3. Integrate women and girls into the Iraqi Artists Syndicate, Musicians Association, and civil society activities linked to culture in the city. Special training for female musicians should be organized to enable them to engage in these activities while ensuring a safe artistic environment for women and girls.

**In the longer term (1-10 Years):**

1. Involve the Iraqi Artists Syndicate, the Musicians Association, and civil society organizations working in culture in the decision-making process regarding issues like the reconstruction of the city and other major initiatives that affect the social and economic life of the city. This recommendation is directed at the city's political leaders.
2. Work with the local and national media to highlight the city's music scene in the media, with a focus on the musically talented girls and young men as positive role models. The Iraqi Artists Syndicate, Musicians Association, cultural and arts NGOs, fine arts institutes, and local media must take up this responsibility.
3. Support music hobbyists' associations, and provide them with the necessary resources to practice and disseminate their hobby. This should be the responsibility of the Mosul Governorate and the Ministry of Culture.
4. Organize musical activities on all public occasions, making them accessible to the majority of Mosul residents: men, women, and children- not only elites or officials. This recommendation is directed at the bodies representing the musicians, concert halls, and the Mosul Governorate.
5. Support regional and international music festivals and events in the city and highlight the role of music in supporting tourism. Responsibility for implementing this recommendation rests with the Mosul Governorate, the Ministry of Culture, and the civil society organizations working in culture and arts in the city.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: The Five Questionnaire Forms Used in the Field Research

## The Impact of Armed Conflict on Music

Case Study: Mosul 2014 - 2021

### Questionnaire Form 1

(Musical creation and performance - 15 respondents)

Personal information:

Name:

Occupation:

Age:

Between 20 and 30 years ☐

Between 30 and 40 years ☐

Between 40 and 50 years ☐

More than 50 years ☐

Education:

High School or lower ☐

University ☐

Postgraduate Studies ☐

Profession or occupation:

Current place of residence:

Places of residence during the period (2014 - 2021):

---

Q1: When did you start playing music/singing?

Q2: Did you perform concerts, whether alone or with a group?

If yes

Q2-1: What are the approximate dates in which you perform?



**Q2-2: In what locations/venues have you performed concerts?**

**Q2-3: What is the approximate number of attendees?**

**Q3: Have you composed music or songs? What are your most prominent works?**

**If yes:**

**Q3-1: How did you present your work to the public?**

**Q3-2: When?**

**Q3-3: Where?**

**Q3-4: What is the name of the musical group?**

**Q5: Have you obtained, or are currently receiving, a financial income from working in music? How much would you say you earn in this business?**

**Q6: What musical instrument(s) do you play?**

**Q7: How do you procure your musical instrument(s)?**

**Q8: What is the cost of the musical instrument(s) that you use?**

**Q9: Do you use social media and/or other websites to share your work?**

**If yes:**

**Q9-1: What social media platforms and websites do you use to share your work?**

**Q9-2: Do you record and upload your work yourself, or do you require technical assistance?**

**Q9-3: Approximately how many works have you shared on social media platforms and other websites?**

**Q9-4: How many listeners/viewers have these works reached?**

**Q10: Have you been a member of a Syndicate, association, or musical group for more than a year? If yes, what is it?**

**Q11: Do you plan to continue working in music?**





---

**Q12: Did you play music, sing, or compose music before 2014?**

**If yes:**

**Q12-1: What kind of musical activity did you engage in before 2014?**

**Q12-2: Did you perform concerts alone or with a group? Where? When? What were the approximate numbers of attendees?**

**Q12-3: What genre of music do you practice:**

**Traditional Music**

☐

**Folk Music**

☐

**Western Classical Music**

☐

**Other genres**

☐

**Q14: Did your interest in music begin during the period of ISIS rule?**

**If yes:**

**Q14-1: How did this interest emerge, and how did it develop?**

**Q14-2: Were you able to obtain a musical instrument? How?**

**Q15: Did you stop working in music during the period of ISIS rule?**

**Q15-1: Do you remember the date you stopped working in music? When was it?**

**Q15-2: Did you work in music covertly during the period of ISIS rule, how?**

**Q16: Were you harassed or abused because of your music during the period of ISIS rule?**

**Q17: Do you know about cases of abuse, arrest or assassination of musicians during the period of ISIS rule?**

**Q18: Were you able to continue to play music normally immediately after the defeat of ISIS in 2017?**

**Q19: Did you perform concerts in the city in the years: 2017-2018-2019-2020-2021?**

**If the answer is yes:**

**Q19-1: Can you determine the number of concerts, their venues, and the number of the attendees each year separately, even if approximately?**

**Q19-2: Were these concerts sponsored by foreign bodies and organizations?**



**Q19-3: Have you given private concerts to Iraqi individuals or parties during these years?**

**Q20: Do you currently feel safe enough to present your music to the public at public concerts?**

**Q21: Do you think there is a difference in the social view of music before ISIS occupied the city in 2014, and then after its defeat in 2017? If yes, What is the difference?**

**Q22: What do you think are currently the most pressing needs of musicians in the city of Mosul?**

# The Impact of Armed Conflict on Music

Case Study: Mosul 2014 - 2021

## Questionnaire Form 2

(Music education - 10 respondents)

Personal information:

Name:

Occupation:

Age:

Between 20 and 30 years ☐

Between 30 and 40 years ☐

Between 40 and 50 years ☐

More than 50 years ☐

Education

High School or lower ☐

University ☐

Postgraduate Studies ☐

Profession or occupation:

Current place of residence:

Places of residence during the period (2014 -2021):

---

Q1: When did you start teaching music?

Q2: Have you studied music academically?

If yes:

Q2-1: What is the name of the institute or college in which you studied?

Q2-2: What did you specialize in?

Q2-3: What diploma were you awarded?

Q3: Do you give private music lessons?

If yes:

Q3-1: How many lessons do you give per week?



**Q3-2: How many students do you give private lessons to?**

**Q3-3: What subjects and skills do you teach?**

**Q4: Do you teach music within an educational or social institution?**

**If yes:**

**Q4-1: What is the name of the institution?**

**Q4-2: How many lessons do you teach per week?**

**Q4-3: How many students?**

**Q4-4: What subjects and skills do you teach?**

**Q5: How much would you approximate you earn giving music classes?**

**Q6: What musical instrument(s) do you play?**

**Q7: Where do you get your musical instrument(s) from?**

**Q8: How much do the musical instrument(s) you use cost?**

**Q9: Do you use social media and/or websites for music education?**

**If yes:**

**Q9-1: What social media platforms and websites do you use for music education?**

**Q9-2: Do you record and upload your music lessons yourself, or do you require technical assistance?**

**Q9-3: How many lessons do you share on social media platforms and other websites?**

**Q9-4: What is the approximate number of listeners / viewers of these lessons?**

**Q10: Do you use a fixed curriculum for music education? Is this curriculum publicly available?**

**Q11: What genre of music do you teach:**

Traditional Music ☐

Folk Music ☐

Western Classical Music ☐

Other ☐

**Q12: Have you been a member of a Syndicate, association, or musical group for more than a year? If yes, what is it?**

**Q13: Do you plan to continue teaching music?**

---

**Q12: Did you give music classes before 2014?**

**If yes:**

**Q12-1: Approximately how many private lessons did you teach with these institutions before 2014?**

**Q12-2: Approximately how many students did you teach before 2014?**

**Q13: Did you work in music education while ISIS ruled Mosul?**

**If yes:**

**Q14-1: How did you give these lessons?**

**Q14-2: Were you able to obtain a musical instrument to use in your classes? How?**

**Q15: Did you stop working in music education during the period in which ISIS occupied the city?**

**Q15-1: Do you remember the date you stopped working in music education? When was that?**

**Q15-2: Did you give music classes covertly during the period in which ISIS occupied the city, how?**

**Q16: Were you harassed or abused because of your work in music education during the period in which ISIS ruled the city?**

**Q17: Do you know about cases of abuse, arrest or detention of music teachers during the period in which ISIS ruled the city?**

**Q18: Were you able to resume working in music education normally immediately after ISIS was defeated in 2017?**

**Q19: Did you give music classes in the city in the years: 2017-2018-2019-2020-2021?**

**If yes:**

**Q19-1: Can you specify the number of lessons, and can you tell us how many each year separately, even if you have to approximate?**

**Q19-2: Were these lessons given within the context of working with foreign bodies and organizations?**

**Q19-3: Did you give private music classes during these years?**

**Q20: Do you currently feel safe enough to continue to work in music education?**

**Q21: Do you think there is a difference in society's view of music as compared to before ISIS occupied the city in 2014; what about since its defeat in 2017? If yes, what is the difference?**



Action for Hope  
العمل للأمل

**Q22: What do you think are the most important needs of Music teachers and students in the city of Mosul now?**



# The Impact of Armed Conflict on Music

Case Study: Mosul 2014 -2021

## Questionnaire Form 3

(Music production - 10 respondents)

Personal information:

Name:

Occupation:

Age:

Between 20 and 30 years ☐

Between 30 and 40 years ☐

Between 40 and 50 years ☐

More than 50 years ☐

Education

High School or lower ☐

University ☐

Postgraduate Studies ☐

Profession or occupation:

Current place of residence:

Places of residence during the period (2014 -2021):

---

Q1: What kind of music production do you do?

Organizing ☐ recording sessions Recording and releasing albums ☐

Recording and uploading on the internet ☐ Other production work, what is it? ☐

Q2: Do you work in music production consistently?

If yes:

Q2-1: How much music and what type of music do you produce?

Q2-2: How many people view and listen to these productions?

Q3: Do you work in music production through a company or institution?



If yes:

Q3-1: What is the name of the company or institution?

Q3-2: How many productions would the company or institution release annually?

Q3-3: How much capital does it have and/or what was its last annual budget?

Q4: How much would you approximate you earn from music production?

Q6: What equipment and devices do you use for production?

Q7: Where do you obtain the equipment and devices that you use in production?

Q8: How much do the equipment and devices that you use in production cost?

Q9: Do you use social media and/or websites to publish your music productions?

If yes:

Q9-1: What social media and websites do you use?

Q9-2: Do you share your own works or do you require technical assistance?

Q9-3: Approximately, how many works have you shared on social media and other websites?

Q9-4: How many people would you say listen/view of these works?

Q11: What genre of music do you produce?

Traditional Music ☐

Folk Music ☐

Western Classical Music ☐

Other genres ☐

Q12: Have you been a member of a Syndicate, association, or musical group specialized in music producers for more than a year? If yes, what is it?

Q13: Do you plan to continue producing music?

---

Q12: Did you practice music production before 2014?

If yes:

Q12-1: Approximately how many works did you produce before 2014?

Q12-2: Approximately how many viewers/listeners of your work were there before 2014?

Q13: Did you work in music production during the period of ISIS rule?



If yes:

Q14-1: How did you produce this music?

Q14-2: Were you able to obtain the necessary production equipment? How?

Q15: Did you stop working in music production during the period of ISIS rule?

Q15-1: Do you remember the date you stopped working in music production? When was that?

Q15-2: Did you work in music production covertly during the period of ISIS rule, how?

Q16: Were you harassed or abused because of your work in music production during the period of ISIS rule?

Q17: Do you know about cases of abuse, arrest or assassination of music producers during the period of ISIS rule?

Q18: Were you able to resume work in music production normally immediately after the defeat of ISIS in 2017?

Q19: Did you work in music production in the city in the years: 2017-2018-2019-2020-2021?

If the answer is yes:

Q19-1: Can you determine the number of works you produced in each year separately, even if approximately?

Q19-2: Were these works in the context of working with foreign bodies and organizations?

Q19-3: Have you produced musical works for Iraqi entities, which ones?

Q20: Were the venues for presenting and producing music from theaters, cultural centers and studios destroyed during the period from 2014 to 2017?

If yes:

Q20-1: What are these places?

Q20 – 2: have they been restored and returned to work after 2017?

Q21: What are the new music production and performance venues that were established or opened in Mosul during the period from 2017 to 2021?

Q22: Do you currently feel secure enough to continue your career in music production?

Q23: Do you think there is a difference in the social view of music before ISIS occupied the city in 2014, and then after its defeat in 2017? If yes, What is the difference??

Q24: What do you think are the most prominent needs of music producers in the city of Mosul now?

# The Impact of Armed Conflict on Music

Case Study: Mosul 2014 - 2021

## Questionnaire Form 4

(Music-related professions – 5 respondents)

Personal information:

Name:

Occupation:

Age:

Between 20 and 30 years ☐

Between 30 and 40 years ☐

Between 40 and 50 years ☐

More than 50 years ☐

Education

High School or lower ☐

University ☐

Postgraduate Studies ☐

Profession or occupation:

Current place of residence:

Places of residence during the period (2014 -2021):

---

Q1: What kind of music-related services do you provide?

Selling Musical Instruments ☐

Repairing Musical Instruments ☐

Selling Audio Equipment ☐

Renting Audio Equipment ☐

Renting Theater Equipment ☐

Other services, what are they? ☐

Q2: Is this service provided through a company or institution?

If yes:

Q2-1: What is the name of the company or institution?

Q2-2: How many contracts or agreements does the company or institution conclude annually?



**Q2-3: How much capital does the company have and/or what was its last annual budget?**

**Q3: How much money do you make providing music-related services?**

**Q4: Where do you obtain the equipment and devices that you use to provide services?**

**Q5: How much do the equipment and devices that you use to provide services?**

**Q6: Do you use social media and/or websites to advertise your services?**

**If yes:**

**Q6-1: What social media platforms and other websites do you use?**

**Q6-2: Do you publish your ads yourself or do you need technical assistance?**

**Q6-3: How many ads did you place on social media and other websites, approximately?**

**Q6-4: How many people view these ads?**

**Q7: Have you been a member of a Syndicate, association, or group working in music-related service provision for more than a year? If the answer is yes, which?**

**Q8: Do you plan to continue providing music-related services?**

---

**Q9: Were you providing such services before 2014?**

**If yes:**

**Q9-1: Approximately how many contracts or agreements did you conclude to provide services before 2014?**

**Q10: Did you provide music-related services during the period of ISIS rule?**

**If yes:**

**Q10-1: How did you provide these services?**

**Q11: Did you stop providing music-related services during the period of ISIS rule?**



If the answer is yes:

**Q11-1: Do you remember the date at which you stopped providing music-related services? When was that?**

**Q11-2: Did you provide these services overtly during the period of ISIS rule, how?**

**Q12: Were you harassed or abused because of your provision of music-related services during the period of ISIS rule?**

**Q13: Do you know about cases of abuse, arrest or assassination of others who provide services related to music during the period of ISIS rule?**

**Q14: Were you able to resume providing music services normally immediately after the defeat of ISIS in 2017?**

**Q15: Have you provided music-related services in the city in the years: 2017-2018-2019-2020-2021?**

If the answer is yes:

**Q15-1: Can you tell us the number of contracts or agreements that you have concluded in each year separately, even if you have to approximate?**

**Q15-2: Were these agreements concluded with foreign bodies and organizations?**

**Q15-3: Have you provided music-related services for Iraqi entities, which ones?**

**Q16: Were the venues for presenting and producing music from theaters, cultural centers and studios destroyed during the period from 2014 to 2017?**

If yes:

**Q16-1: What are these places?**

**Q16-2: Have they been rehabilitated and become operational after 2017?**

**Q17: What new music production studios and performance venues were established or opened in Mosul between 2017 and 2021?**

**Q18: Do you currently feel safe enough to continue providing music-related services?**

**Q19: Do you think there is a difference in the social view of music before ISIS occupied the city in 2014, and then after its defeat in 2017? If yes, What is the difference?**



# The Impact of Armed Conflict on Music

Case Study: Mosul 2014 - 2021

## Questionnaire Form 5

(Music-related social practices – 10 respondents)

Personal information:

Name:

Occupation:

Age:

Between 20 and 30 years ☐

Between 30 and 40 years ☐

Between 40 and 50 years ☐

More than 50 years ☐

Education:

High School or lower ☐

University ☐

Postgraduate Studies ☐

Profession or occupation:

Current place of residence:

Places of residence during the period (2014 - 2021):

---

Q1: What type and name of the musical activity do you take part in?

Religious music ☐

Wedding-related music ☐

Music for non-religious events ☐

Related to other occasions, what? ☐

Q2: Do you consider yourself a specialist, are you good at performing?

Q3: Are other members of your family good at the same activity?

Q4: Do you use musical or percussion instruments for this activity? What are they?



**Q5: Where do you obtain these instruments?**

**Q6: How much do these instruments cost?**

**Q7: Would you object to being filmed while performing this practice?**

**If yes:**

**Q7-1: Why would you object?**

**Q8: Could you briefly describe this practice?**

**Q9: Approximately how many times a year do you engage in this activity?**

**Q10: How many people participate, and many people watch this activity each time?**

**Q11: Do you intend to continue to do this activity?**

---

**Q12: Were doing this activity before 2014?**

**If yes:**

**Q12-1: Approximately how many times did you take part before 2014?**

**Q12-2: Approximately how many other participants would be taking part in this activity before 2014?**

**Q13: Did you continue to engage in this activity during the period of ISIS rule? How?**

**Q14: Did you stop participating during the period of ISIS rule?**

**Q14-1: Do you remember the date you stopped participating? When was that?**

**Q14-2: Did you engage in this activity covertly during the period of ISIS rule, how?**

**Q15: Were you harassed or abused because of your engagement in this activity during the period of ISIS rule?**

**Q16: Do you know about cases of abuse, arrest or assassination of other participants in this practice during the period of ISIS rule of the city?**

**Q18: Were you able to continue engaging in this activity normally immediately after the defeat of ISIS in 2017?**

**Q19: Did you engage in this activity in the city in the years: 2017-2018-2019-2020-2021?**

**If the answer is yes:**

**Q19-1: Can you specify the number of times you participated each year, even if only approximately?**

**Q20: Do you currently feel safe enough to continue participating in this practice?**

**Q21: Do you think there is a difference in the social view of musical and lyrical practices before ISIS occupied the city in 2014, then after its defeat in 2017? If yes, what is the difference?**

## Appendix 2: List of Field Research Respondents

	Name	Title
1	Maher Aziz Qassem	Music teacher
2	Nabil Hazem Al-Atrqaji	Music teacher
3	Rabea Namir Fadel	Music teacher
4	Ehsan Akram Habib	Music teacher
5	Tahseen Hassan Ali "Tahseen Haddad"	Artists Syndicate Branch Chairman
6	Mus'ab Isshaq Abdul Mohsen	Music teacher
7	Ali Nazim "Tamkeen Center"	Music teacher
8	Hani Abdullah Mahmoud "Tamkeen Center"	Music teacher
9	Ban Muhammad Shakib	Music teacher
10	Akram Ahmed Habib	Music teacher
11	Ghazi Salem Muhammad	Keyboardist
12	Abdul Rahman Hammadi Salem	Singer
13	Ayman Ahmed Younes	Keyboardist
14	Zahir Hajji Munif	Singer
15	Fahad Hanash Shalkh	Rabab player
16	Rabie Mal Allah Shukr	Singer
17	Ahmed Abdel Moneim "Ahmed Dana Al-Saghir"	Percussionist
18	Talal Taha al-Shamali	Musicians Association President
19	Mahmoud Adel Mahmoud	Keyboardist

20	Mohamed Ragab Saeed "Mohamed Zaki"	Singer
21	Mohamed Fadel Mohamed "Mohamed Dana"	Percussionist
22	Mustafa Mohammed	Percussionist
23	Moumen Mohammed Fadel "Moumen Al-Qatari"	Percussionist
24	Mohammed Ghanem Abdullah "Mohamed Al-Rahhal"	Singer
25	Mohamed Abdel Qader "Mohamed Al-Fahd"	Keyboardist
26	Adel Suleiman Daoud	Concert coordinator
27	Hamid Saleh Adday "Mohamed Al-Asil"	Singer
28	Hassan Ahmed Taha "Piano Center"	Music instruments shop
29	Mustafa Bayat Muhammad	Instrument technician and musician
30	Ahmed Salem Mahmoud	Instrument technician and musician
31	Miqdad Abdullah Al-Abadi	Reciter of religious chants
32	Shu'aib Bashar Hashem	Chanter and musician
33	Mohamed Salem Sheet	Reciter of religious chants
34	Laith Asaad Gha'eb	Reciter of religious chants
35	Firas Nabil Abdullah Shaheen	Musician
36	Mohamed Saad Mahmoud	Musician and performer
37	Anas Samir Thanoun	Musician and performer
38	Sabhan Khaled Saadi	Keyboardist
39	Hind Tariq	Amateur/housewife

40	Nadia	Amateur/housewife
41	Mouayad Khalil Suleiman Al Sabawi	Audio Engineer
42	Abdullah Hashem "Abdullah Al-Asmar"	Singer
43	Harith Yassin, "Al-Kitab Forum"	Manager
44	Radio One FM	Radio broadcasting
45	Al Aseel Music Office	Concert coordinator
46	Ahmed Elias Khudair	Concert coordinator
47	Abdul Aziz Waad Khalaf	Concert coordinator
48	Royal Palace Hall: Mohamed Moayed	Concert Hall
49	Princesses Palace: Ryan Nashwan	Concert Hall
50	SoundPro Company: Mohamed Saleh	Record company



## **Appendix 3: Incidents of Persecution of Musicians in Mosul During the Period of ISIS Control (2014 - 2017)<sup>75</sup>**

All respondents said that they feel safer now than they had when the city had been occupied. Moreover, they are extremely optimistic about the future of the city and their musical careers. However, deep fears still envelope their lives and the life of the city. Overcoming the traumas of life under ISIS rule is not straightforward. The terror group behaved with extreme brutality and cruelty to prevent citizens from thinking of resistance and to impose their full authority on all aspects of life in the city. While 36% of respondents admitted to having been harassed or abused, we doubt the accuracy of this figure because an honest answer to this question exposes open wounds in the hearts of many. Their denial is merely an attempt to heal and retrieve their sense of dignity. The city and its people were deliberately and systematically humiliated, abused and terrorized for a long time. No sensitive musician could have survived the Islamic State, even if he or she had not been physically harmed, without having endured severe psychological harm. We even noticed the distress and doubt on the faces of most of our interviewees when they were asked about ISIS abuse, showing they do not want to discuss the matter. Perhaps the fear of the terrorist organization's return to the city remains an obsession that haunts many.

Our analysis of the numbers we obtained confirms our fears: while 36% of artists said they had not been harassed or abused, 18% were displaced and had to leave Mosul to escape persecution and stay alive. Bizarrely, these displaced persons are considered lucky by other inhabitants despite having suffered a great deal and having lost most of their possessions after leaving their homes. Moreover, 46% said that they were subjected to persecution, abuse or harassment because of their work. What is really strange and striking about this is that 70% of those asked if they had heard or witnessed cases of cruelty or abuse said they had not. This does not line up with 46% of them having personally been subjected to cruelty, abuse or at least harassment.

Below are the most insightful findings obtained from the questionnaires regarding the terrorization, harassment, or abuse of artists:

1. Maher Aziz Al-Tahhan: They attacked the two artists Ameen Mokhdad and Muhammad Al-Adwani. They broke into the former's house, and claiming he was possessed by the devil, they assaulted him. As for the latter, he was detained for a period, and they took him out every morning and told him that it was the day of his execution before shooting a bullet near his head and telling him that his execution would be postponed till the next day.
2. Mrs. Ban Muhammad Shakib: I was personally tried in Sharia court because I am a piano teacher. I was released after pledging to quit.

---

<sup>75</sup>This appendix was edited by Nahid al-Ramadani based on the field research.

3. Mustafa Bayat: A young musician who also repairs instruments tried to escape the city and was arrested with his father and remained imprisoned for a week
4. Miqdad Al-Abadi: Some vocalists who publicly performed religious songs were killed.
5. Moayad Khalil: A sound engineer was arrested by the Hesba, and his studio was completely destroyed.
6. Wissam Waad Ahmed: Concert organizer and owner of a CD shop. His workplace and music library were seized. All his equipment was destroyed, and he was publicly warned not to go back to doing his work. It destroyed his career, and it has yet to recover.
7. Hamid Saleh Aday: A singer and concert planner, his office was burnt down completely, and they made an example of him, beating him with 20 lashes. He says that three of the artists were executed as a result of their playing and singing. They are Hussein Al-Jubouri, Younis Al-Sabawi, and Khudair Al-Sabawi.
8. Abdul Aziz Waad Khalaf: He was arrested for a week and punished with eighty lashes.
9. Rabih Malallah Shukr: A singer who was personally publicly flogged and degraded in public.
10. Ahmed Abdel Moneim: He says that the singer Amir Al-Lami was arrested for three months and subsequently released.

## Appendix 4: Personal interviews conducted by Nahidh al-Ramadani with:

- Tahseen Haddad - Iraqi Artists Syndicate - Nineveh Branch
- Moayad Al Sabawi - Owner of Al Manahil Studio
- Nabil Al-Atraqji
- Sheikh Miqdad Al-Abbadi
- Bayat Merhi and Muwaffaq Al-Taei

### Summary of the meeting with Tahseen Haddad, Chairman of the Iraqi Artists Syndicate in Nineveh – 3 November 2021

About the Syndicate:

The Syndicate consists of a section for music, another for theater, a third for composition, and a fourth for audio and visual arts. It has 287 members and a total of 350 singers and musicians. Some members automatically join the Syndicate after graduating from the College of Arts. Around 120 musicians work in Nineveh. Within the city, there are about 75 musicians and around 35 singers. The Syndicate grants membership to those without a diploma based on their talent after the applicant undergoes an examination and is evaluated by a committee.

The Syndicate's primary responsibility: to organize the artists' work. Secondly, they must defend their rights. It is a semi-official institution and works in coordination with the Iraqi Ministry of Culture. It is currently not being funded by the government, and we are trying to self-finance ourselves but have so far only managed to raise meager sums.

The main problems we face:

The lack of public venues after the demolition of the two main theaters in Mosul is the prominent obstacle. The private venues where concerts are currently being held lack basic acoustic design and equipment needed for concerts. We also need funding bodies that produce and release art, coordinate at a high level with foreign and local organizations working in Mosul, and organize training initiatives for no less than a year to produce something of high quality.

### Summary of the meeting with sound engineer Muayad Al Sabawi-11/1/2020

The first to establish an audio recording studio in Mosul, "Studio Al-Manahil"

He began recording music in Mosul in the mid-nineties, and the options were very basic. Nonetheless, with tape recorders that only hold four tracks, he managed to record a very large number of Mosul songs. The scarcity of recording studios was a destination for singers from the northern governorates.

The absence of production rights and the broad lack of respect for intellectual property laws have made producing art financially unfeasible, leading to the contraction of artistic production and the low number of professional musicians in Mosul and Iraq in general.

The lack of oversight during all stages of production (lyrics, melody, recording, photography) has left us with an immense amount of cheap songs that have become popular with young people and prevented them from listening to better music.

Summary of the meeting with Nabil Al-Atrakji, musician, arranger, and flute and guitar instructor - 3/11/2021

Experience of communicating with the outside world:

“Even before 2017- since 2003- anyone in contact with the outside world was considered a traitor and targeted. In 2017, immediately after the liberation, communicating with others from across the world became possible.

I collaborated with the Belgian channel VRT and its war correspondents covering the liberation. I performed two songs, one by Neil Armstrong and another by John Lennon. I sang them over the ruins of Mosul. It was broadcast and resonated strongly in Belgium, leading to a grass-roots campaign to collect musical instruments and send them to Mosul. They were distributed to the art institutes. This collaboration endured. I also worked with the American Development Program, which sponsored 8 Ramadan concerts and nights in collaboration with Maestro Karim Wasfi.

Coordination with international organizations is needed and crucial, provided that the work is systematic, well thought out and beneficial to both parties. Being closed off is dangerous, and we must deter our youths from becoming insular while encouraging them to engage with others. The world would completely change if people communicated everywhere."

Summary of the meeting with reciter of religious chants Sheikh Mokdad Al-Abadi, on 11/10/2020

Mosul has a rich musical heritage with ancient roots that may go back to the Abbasid era, and its music has had a broad influence on modern Arabic music.

The oldest documented *tanzilat* is by Sheikh Othman al-Khatib, who died in 1732 AD. *Tanzilat* are similar to the Aleppine Qudoud, but they have their Mosuli style. They are also similar to *muwashahat*, but they are not the same. There are *muwashahat* in Mosul and that is what we called them, but their structure differs from that of *tanzilat*. Some poets wrote both *tanzilat* and *muwashahat*.

An estimated 250 have been written. But the value of the *tanzilat* is in their melody, as without it, the *tanzilat* becomes ordinary poems. I sought to collect *tanzilat* from the minstrels of Mosul. I was not satisfied with that, so I collected others that had appeared in Baghdad and Kirkuk as Mosuli *tanzilat* and subsequently disappeared from Mosul for some reason. I have spent more

than 30 years on a continuous journey collecting *tanzilat* in a personal effort to preserve this heritage.

These *tanzilat* were distributed through personal contacts although some are old, rare recordings made in 1921 by Sayyid Ahmed and Sayyid Amin, two of the most famous *tanzilat* reciters. Not all *tanzilat* were recorded at that time because there had been no demand from the general public, leaving companies uninterested in them.

Another means by which *tanzilat* were preserved was their recitation on Mawlid celebrations, meaning large numbers of people would hear them repeatedly. Twelve *tanzilat* were recorded, with music, by the vocalist Ramez Al-Rawi in 2013, who had been commissioned by the governor of Mosul. There was a project to record all the *tanzilat*, but the ISIS invasion of Mosul ended it.

A summary of the meeting with the artists Bayat Merhi and Muwaffaq Al-Tai and a talk about the Spring Festival and its impact on the musical movement in Mosul - 3/11/2020

School activities were crucial for the promotion of the art movement in general and music and singing in particular. Extracurricular departments also played another important role in preserving the oral folklore from the songs of craftsmen, children's and mothers' songs, and old wedding songs.

The first spring festival was launched in Mosul in 1969, and the organizers relied on school activities to prepare music sections due to the lack of other artistic cadres in the province. The first festival was small but invigorated all the artists in the city and pushed them to work more seriously. The second festival thus saw a great leap in quality, as the artists decided to collect and highlight the identity of Mosul in their work. They thus began collecting this heritage and transforming it into operettas co-written by the most prominent poets in Mosul at the time. Preparing for the festival took us at least three months.

The festival was held over two days: processions roamed the city in the morning, and concerts were held in the evening. Concerts on the first evening were dedicated to Arab singers. The second evening was dedicated to the Mosul artists, in which we presented the operettas that we had prepared- works that summed up what we knew of Mosul's oral heritage of songs, customs, proverbs and melodies, as well as popular children's songs.

The people of the city waited for the festival with great eagerness, and the whole city would turn into a big carnival. The pieces we performed were very well received in the city and were re-broadcasted repeatedly through the local Mosul TV channel, which made these operettas and songs more popular. There is no doubt that a large number of artists today started their careers by doing art and or performing music as children.

We believe that bringing this festival back would contribute to achieving several goals, the first of which is reviving the Mosuli spirit that has been exhausted by war. Children and schools should be thrown into the worlds of artwork and music especially. Moreover, teachers would be

motivated to be creative and raise their game to keep pace with this event. The recreation of the festival will not be opposed by people who may resent some forms of other forms of art, as it represents an extended event in the memories of the people of Mosul.