

# About CGDS

## Center for Gender and Development Studies



We are privileged to launch the Center for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS) at this important conference that marks the resilience of the Ezidi people, especially the Ezidi women who have become a beacon of hope and humanity in the face of extreme brutality. Their plight and high spirit to overcome the atrocities committed against them will be a continuous source of inspiration for our work. We wish you a fruitful conference and would like to take this opportunity to give you some information about our center and our work.

The Center for Gender and Development Studies at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS) works on academic research and community development. It seeks to become a hub of knowledge and ideas, which will then be disseminated within society through outreach strategies. The ultimate aim of the center's community initiatives is to ensure that academic initiatives lead to normative change, development, and improved gender relations. This will be achieved by sharing information, providing training, and supporting women's economic empowerment, leadership and management. We believe that CGDS can become both a focal point for gender and development scholarship in the region, as well as a vector of social change in Iraqi and Kurdish societies –a concrete way to support women in their struggle to regain the voice and agency that belong to them.

CGDS has developed several research and development projects. We are awaiting funding outcomes to make a start. Below are our main objectives.

### **Academic level:**

- Increase and enhance AUIS's research capacity in the field of gender and development studies;
- Promote gender in the university's curricula through the expansion of the course offer;
- Provide the knowledge basis for normative change regarding gender roles and relations within Kurdish and Iraqi society;
- Create a space for national, regional and global dialogue on contemporary gender issues.

### **Community Outreach level:**

- Disseminate knowledge and information regarding gender and development issues within local communities;
- Support development, governance, and economic empowerment for women;
- Amplify women's voice and agency nationally and within their communities as a means of economic and social development;
- Support women's activism in the region;
- Promote gender informed practices in professional and humanitarian contexts.

### **CGDS Team**

The Center for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS) sits under the umbrella of the Institute of Regional and International Studies (IRIS) at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani. The center works together with a team of student volunteers who perform different roles.



**Dr. Choman Hardi** (founding director) was born in Sulaimani and lived in Iraq and Iran before seeking asylum in the UK in 1993. She was educated in the universities of Oxford (B.A, Philosophy and Psychology), London (M.A, Philosophy) and Kent (Ph.D, Mental Health). She was awarded a scholarship from the Leverhulme Trust for her post-doctoral research about women survivors of genocide in Kurdistan. The resulting book, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide: Anfal Survivors in Kurdistan-Iraq* (Ashgate, 2011), was chosen by the Yankee Book Peddler as a UK Core Title.

Between 2009 and 2011 Hardi was a Senior Associate Member of St Antony's College, University of Oxford. In 2014 she moved back to her home city to become an assistant professor in the department of English at AUIS. In 2015 she founded the Center for Gender and Development Studies there.

Hardi has published collections of poetry in Kurdish and English. Four poems from her first English collection, *Life for Us* (Bloodaxe, 2004) were included in the English GCSE curriculum in the UK (AQA and Edexcel). In August 2014, her poem, 'Summer Roof', was chosen by London's Southbank Center as one of the '50 greatest love poems of the past 50 years'. In November 2014 she was awarded The Woman's Prize by Andesha Cultural Center in Sulaimani for her literary and academic achievements. Her latest English collection, *Considering the Women* (Bloodaxe Books, 2015), was given a recommendation by the Poetry Book Society.

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**Shiereen Saib** (Project Manager) was born in Sulaimani but was raised and educated in The Netherlands, where she obtained a degree in Political Science at the University of Amsterdam. At the age of 16 she became the national coordinator of the Youth Council at the Federation of Refugee Organizations in The Netherlands and ever since she has been active in the field of migration, diversity and empowerment. She has worked as a legal adviser at the Dutch Refugee Council. In the last 15 years she has developed and managed projects for several organizations in The Netherlands and The United Kingdom around social participation, empowerment and diversity. She is also an experienced facilitator and trainer. Shiereen moved back to Sulaimani late 2014 and has recently joined AUIS as the Project Manager of the Center for Gender and Development Studies.

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Please visit our website to keep informed about new developments and activities:

[www.auis.edu.krd/CGDS](http://www.auis.edu.krd/CGDS)