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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[04 June 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation protecting human rights during the Covid-19 pandemic

2020 has seen the world face a crisis of an unprecedented nature in the form of COVID-19. As every corner of the globe has felt the risk presented by this pandemic, the most vulnerable in our societies have been some of the worst affected.

Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation is an organisation committed to helping orphaned children living in poverty in Iraq. We believe these children should be given the opportunity to thrive in spite of their difficult circumstances, not just to survive them. For this reason, through our programmes, we provide financial aid, psychological rehabilitation, medical care, educational support, personal development, vocational training, housing and more to orphaned children.

Through the work Al-Ayn does on the ground in Iraq, it became clear that COVID-19 added another dangerous dimension to the plight of orphaned children and that they were at a heightened risk because of their circumstances.

Al-Ayn therefore took steps immediately to set up a COVID-19 emergency campaign, not only addressing the needs of its regular beneficiaries but also expanding its reach to other families living in impoverished areas. Within the space of a week, Al-Ayn was able to reach 137,000 individuals and provide them with a 'food parcel' which included sanitisation material. 1,250 volunteers were involved in the preparation and distribution of the food parcels, and volunteers also began making face masks in Al-Ayn headquarters in Baghdad, averaging 2,500 per day. Utilising the structures already in place within the organisation, which include 500 coordinators in different areas of Iraq and over 1,000 staff members, allowed us to respond swiftly to people's needs, especially those in remote rural areas. At all times we worked with local government to ensure that we had permission for vehicles to carry out aid distribution, even during the period of lockdown. An Iraqi official government report shows that Al-Ayn's efforts reached the highest number of people when compared to other NGOs.

At Al-Ayn, we are also doing our part to minimise the risk of spreading the virus by changing the way we operate on the ground. Staff numbers in offices have been reduced in order to maintain social distancing, and those who are in the office work on shifts. The distribution hall where beneficiaries collect their monthly aid has been moved outdoors wherever possible, with a screen placed between staff and those attending. Similarly, seating areas have been adjusted so that those waiting to collect their aid can maintain social distance. All our volunteers have been provided with suitable personal protective equipment, which is also being given to widowed mothers who visit their local Al-Ayn branch, though we have also set up teams to deliver financial aid to these mothers.

We have also sought to introduce more innovative ways of enabling beneficiaries to collect financial support, and for supporters to donate. For example, we are testing providing a portion of our beneficiaries with an electronic card through which they receive financial support. This has meant that they have been able to access the support from more local locations. For our supporters based in Iraq, Al-Ayn has been encouraging them to continue to donate through electronic means as opposed to visiting Al-Ayn locations to give their cash. Our supporters in Iraq are not used to donating in this way so we have used this as an opportunity to change habits, with the hope of making it easier and safer for individuals to contribute to the work we do.

Al-Ayn understands the importance of the right to health, as enshrined in various legal texts such as Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognises the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; and Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which recognises the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. Taking a rights-based approach to both the physical and mental health of the child guides the work of Al-Ayn, demonstrated not only by our long-term projects around medical care and psychological rehabilitation but also by the way in which we have mobilised our resources to respond to

the unique challenge presented by COVID-19 to the vulnerable members of society that we support.

As we move forward and navigate the next phase of this pandemic, whether that be returning to some sense of life before the virus, or finding new ways of existing with it, we at Al-Ayn remain inspired by the orphaned children we serve. Their positive spirits despite the hardships they have endured and desires to give back to their societies, remind us that each one of us can make a difference to the lives of others. It is why we take this opportunity to reiterate to the international community that being apart does not mean being alone, and we are ready to work with partners across the globe to achieve our common goal of ensuring every child is treated with the dignity they deserve.
