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## WORLD MONUMENTS FUND INAUGURATES ERBIL CITADEL CHILDREN'S INTERPRETATION CENTER, A PIVOTAL PART OF A LARGER CULTURAL REVITALIZATION PROJECT

The restoration was done in cooperation with the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR)

**New York, NY – April 29, 2024 –** [World Monuments Fund \(WMF\)](#), in conjunction with the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR), recently unveiled the completed [Erbil Citadel Children's Interpretation Center](#) during an inauguration ceremony held yesterday at the newly restored building. WMF led two projects as part of a master plan drafted by HCECR to repopulate the Citadel with new activities to establish the site as a community center. This plan included the restoration of the Heritage Building Complex and the development of the Children's Interpretation Center. The Center will serve as an educational hub for children and tourists to learn about Erbil's heritage and history. WMF and the HCECR are also working together at the Erbil Citadel's historic hammam, considered the oldest in Iraq. Its restoration is expected to be complete later this year.

“The Erbil Citadel Children's Interpretation Center serves as an outstanding example of seamlessly integrating education into heritage projects,” **said Bénédicte de Montlaur, President and CEO of World Monuments Fund.** “With an array of hands-on exhibits and activities, children of the local Erbil community and visiting tourists will be able to explore the region's storied history and the efforts it took to restore the Citadel to its ancient glory.”

One of the world's most extended and continuously inhabited sites, Erbil Citadel has been a central part of the Middle East since ancient Mesopotamia. Early versions of its name are found in several pre-Sumerian written sources, and it was considered an important center during Mesopotamia's Neo-Assyrian period (911 BCE–609 BCE). During the Medieval period, the city was home to many notable poets, historians, and scholars and was the Ottoman Empire's cultural and administrative center. Natural factors and civil unrest in recent history have taken a toll on the ancient buildings, resulting in the structures' disrepair and the Citadel's inclusion on the World Monuments Watch in 2000, 2002, and 2004.

However, when the Kurdistan Regional Government established the HCECR in 2007, new hope for revitalization developed. A plan soon evolved to reactivate Erbil Citadel as a city hub by restoring the ancient buildings and spaces for cultural activities that reengage the local community. In recognition of the Outstanding Universal Value of Erbil Citadel, it was inscribed in the World Heritage List of UNESCO in June 2014. Working with HCECR, WMF began two new projects as part of a joint master plan to repopulate the Citadel with new cultural activities. This included restoring the Heritage Building Complex to install a children's interpretation center on Erbil Citadel's history with support of the US Embassy in Baghdad and the US Consulate in Erbil. WMF and the HCECR also led the project team in designing and researching activities, conducted workshops and training events, and coordinated with all partners and stakeholders.

“The Children's Interpretation Center will be a new attraction at the Erbil Citadel and an important educational tool for school children and families,” **said Nehad Qoja, Head of the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization.**

With its completion, the Erbil Citadel Children's Interpretation Center will serve the community as a rich educational resource, offering an interactive experience for children to explore Erbil's history, archaeology, culture, and heritage. The center boasts a variety of exhibits, including a scale model of Erbil Citadel with pull-out drawers that delve into the site's history; a model of a typical ancient home in the Citadel that, when opened, reveals elements that illuminate how people lived; and a jigsaw timeline of Erbil's history with insertable pottery, tablet, and monument pieces that can be matched with their specific eras.

*World Monuments Fund's work at the Erbil Citadel has been made possible, in part, by the U.S. Embassy Baghdad and the U.S. Consulate General Erbil.*

#### **About World Monuments Fund (WMF)**

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world's most treasured places to enrich people's lives and build mutual understanding across cultures and communities. The organization is headquartered in New York City with offices and affiliates in Cambodia, India, Peru, Portugal, Spain and the UK. Since 1965, our global team of experts has preserved the world's diverse cultural heritage using the highest international standards at more than 700 sites in 112 countries. Partnering with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF draws on heritage to address some of today's most pressing challenges: climate change, underrepresentation, imbalanced tourism, and post-crisis recovery. With a commitment to the people who bring places to life, WMF embraces the potential of the past to create a more resilient and inclusive society.

#### **About the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR)**

The High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR), a special site management body, was established by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in 2007. Since 2010, Erbil Citadel has been the focus of great efforts to reactive the site as the historical and cultural hub of the modern city, involving the accurate conservation and rehabilitation of its built heritage. Revitalization will be achieved by revitalizing and regenerating cultural activities, through the creation of new community linkages between the Citadel and the lower city and through the beneficial reuse of Citadel buildings and spaces for contemporary functions. In recognition of the Outstanding Universal Value of Erbil Citadel, it was inscribed in the World Heritage List of UNESCO in June 2014.