

CALL FOR PROPOSALS / TERMS OF REFERENCE

Legal and Regulatory Help Desk for Civil Society Organisations

Cordaid Iraq — SOUTNA Programme — Funded by the European Union

Contracting authority	Cordaid Iraq, Erbil
Service	Independent legal and regulatory help desk for civil society organisations (CSOs)
Coverage	Baghdad, Erbil, Basra and Nineveh/Mosul — in person at programme hubs and through remote channels
Indicative duration	October 2026 – April 2028 (subject to contracting)
Submission deadline	21 September 2026, end of day (Erbil time)
Submission link	Application Form

1. Purpose

Cordaid seeks a qualified legal service provider to operate a free, independent and practical help desk that supports Iraqi CSOs to operate lawfully, maintain compliance, strengthen governance and resolve legal and administrative problems throughout their organisational life cycle. The help desk builds the capacity of CSOs to meet their own legal obligations; it does not replace them, and it reduces reliance on unverified or commercial intermediaries.

2. Duties and Responsibilities

A. Individual legal advice and legal clinics

- Receive enquiries through a dedicated hotline/WhatsApp number, email and scheduled in-person hours at each of the four hubs; offer bookable clinic slots of 30–60 minutes, in person or online.
- Provide written, legally referenced responses: acknowledgement within one working day; simple enquiries within three working days; complex cases within ten working days; protection cases contacted the same day.
- Triage each case as Level 1 (information, answered directly), Level 2 (document review and consultation) or Level 3 (complex matter, first-line guidance then referral to specialist counsel).

B. Registration and establishment guidance

- Explain registration procedures with the NGO Directorate (federal) and the NGO Department of the Kurdistan Regional Government, including the UR e-services platform and public-benefit status.
- Review by-laws, founding statements, election or appointment minutes and administrative registers prepared by the CSO itself and return written comments; diagnose stalled applications and agree a completion plan with the CSO.

C. Post-registration compliance and amendments

- Maintain an annual compliance checklist (licence renewal, annual report, registers, notifications) and support CSOs to meet it.
- Handle warning and suspension cases: analyse the cause, support the CSO's formal response and follow up to closure.
- Guide amendments: changes of board members or founders, address, branches, scope of work, by-laws and organisational structure, including notifications due to authorities.

- Advise on secondary approvals: residence attestation for premises, sectoral ministry accreditation and accepted specialisations.
- Conduct a legal compliance review of each supported CSO at the start and end of the assignment, issuing a compliance scorecard and an action plan (issue, risk, action, priority, deadline) and tracking closure of each item.

D. Tax and legal-financial framework

- Explain current tax instructions applicable to NGOs, including the Secretariat-General letter of 30 March 2026 (no retroactive assessment; assessment from the year income is generated; unified application in the Kurdistan Region; not a blanket exemption).
- Advise on withholding tax for staff and contractors and on the treatment of grants, donations and gifts; refer complex tax matters to qualified specialists. The help desk does not provide bookkeeping or accounting services.

E. Employment, contracts and governance

- Advise on employment, volunteer, intern and consultancy contracts, social security registration, disciplinary and termination procedures, and provide a standard CSO employment and engagement template package.
- Review, before signature, grant, sub-grant, partnership, consultancy, service, lease, cooperation and non-disclosure agreements, focusing on obligations, liability, reporting duties, termination and dispute-resolution clauses.
- Advise on board disputes, general assembly powers and the lawful procedure for changing members or officers.
- Provide a governance and legal documents toolkit: board terms of reference, delegation of authority, election procedures, conflict-of-interest policy, code of conduct, whistleblowing and complaints mechanisms, decision-making procedures, minute and register formats, authorisation letters, and document retention rules.

F. Legal protection and referral

- Provide first-line guidance in cases of summons, investigation, inspection, document requests, administrative pressure or internal governance disputes, including procedural rights.
- Maintain a vetted referral list of litigating counsel, approved by Cordaid, and follow referred cases to closure. Court representation is outside this assignment.
- Coordinate with the digital security and psychosocial help desks on cases that cut across mandates, under an agreed referral protocol.

G. Awareness, legal alerts and resources

- Issue a legal alert in Arabic and Kurdish within 15 working days of any new law, instruction or circular affecting CSOs, stating what organisations must do, and a quarterly legal update bulletin.
- Publish advisories on high-risk practices: sale or transfer of registered organisations, foreign registrations marketed with promises of UN status or funding, and unaccredited 'internationally recognised' certificates.
- Deliver at least one group session per hub per quarter on a single compliance topic, with attendance records.
- Build and maintain a resource library (checklists, templates, step-by-step guides, FAQ with cited legal sources) and hand it over in editable form at the end of the assignment.

H. Case management, reporting and learning

- Operate a confidential case-management system; log every case within two working days of closure; share only anonymised data with Cordaid.

- Submit a monthly anonymised case log, a quarterly report and a semi-annual analysis of recurring legal barriers by governorate and stage of the CSO life cycle, with recommendations.
- Coordinate with programme trainers and hub facilitators so that legal, governance and compliance guidance is consistent across all support provided to CSOs.

3. Out of Scope

- Preparing registration documents on behalf of CSOs or processing their files at government offices.
- Court representation or litigation.
- Any engagement with the sale, transfer or assignment of a registered organisation for consideration; such requests are refused and logged.
- Offering or promoting commercial registration, accreditation or foreign-licensing services to supported CSOs during the assignment, directly or through affiliates.

4. Deliverables

- Inception package within one month of contract start: case-management and referral protocols, litigating-counsel referral list, hub schedule, communication materials.
- Baseline compliance review with scorecard and action plan for each supported CSO within three months; endline review in the final quarter.
- Governance and legal documents toolkit and employment template package in Arabic and Kurdish within four months.
- Monthly case logs, quarterly reports, legal alerts and quarterly bulletins, group session records, and semi-annual analytical reports throughout the assignment.
- Final report and hand-over package: editable resource library, full anonymised case register and sustainability recommendations.

5. Provider Requirements

- A legally registered law firm, legal-aid organisation or consortium authorised to practise in federal Iraq and in the Kurdistan Region (directly or through a named consortium member).
- At least five years' documented experience advising NGOs/CSOs, with demonstrated knowledge of NGO Law No. 12 of 2010, KRI Law No. 1 of 2011, NGO Directorate instructions, and the tax and labour framework applicable to CSOs.
- A team including a lead legal advisor licensed by the Iraqi Bar Association with at least eight years' practice, a legal officer licensed in the Kurdistan Region fluent in Sorani Kurdish, a legal officer able to serve Baghdad, Basra and Nineveh, and a case-management coordinator.
- Capacity to deliver services in Arabic and Kurdish and to report in English.
- No commercial interest in NGO registration, accreditation or foreign-licensing services; proven confidentiality, data-protection and conflict-of-interest safeguards.

6. How to Apply

1. Technical proposal (maximum 12 pages): methodology, service model, case-management and referral approach, team structure, geographic coverage and work plan.
2. Financial proposal in USD as a monthly fee, inclusive of professional fees, travel, communication and applicable taxes.
3. Registration documents and professional licences of the provider and any consortium members.
4. CVs of key personnel with copies of Bar licences.
5. At least three references or examples of similar assignments completed in the last five years.

6. Signed declaration of independence and absence of conflict of interest.

Submit complete technical and financial offers through the following link: [Application Form](#) no later than end of day on **21 September 2026 (Erbil time)**. Questions may be sent to the email address project_soutna@cordaid.org until 14 September 2026; answers will be shared with all applicants.

Offers are assessed on a best-value basis (technical quality, relevant experience, proposed team, methodology, independence safeguards and financial offer). Cordaid may request clarifications or additional documentation. This call does not guarantee the award of a contract. The selected provider must comply with Cordaid's confidentiality, safeguarding, data-protection, integrity and conflict-of-interest requirements and with the visibility requirements of the European Union.