

For Immediate Release

**Statement by Ambassador Lukman Faily on Opening of Iraqi National Jewish Archive Exhibit in New York City
February 3, 2014**

On February 3, 2014, Iraqi Ambassador to the United States Lukman Faily issued the following statement on the opening of the Iraqi National Jewish Archive Exhibit in New York:

“More than ten years ago, the Coalition Forces were searching through the headquarters of Saddam Hussein’s intelligence services, the Al Mukhabarat Building, in Baghdad.

In a flooded basement, they found more than 2,700 Jewish books, in Hebrew and in Arabic, and tens of thousands of other documents and manuscripts. This historic collection was transferred to the United States for treatment and restoration.

By displaying this invaluable archive, the entire world is discovering and exploring an essential part of Iraq’s history and heritage.

I was privileged to have participated in both the opening ceremony for the Iraqi National Jewish Archive at the National Archives in Washington, DC last October, and at the burial ceremony of 49 Torah scroll fragments in New York in December. This is a testament to the Iraqi government’s commitment to supporting the Iraqi diaspora including the Iraqi-Jewish Community.

Jews have lived in Iraq for thousands of years. As with every other community in Iraq, they played a crucial role in building our country and contributing to our culture. For us as Iraqis, it is important to recover this precious piece of our cultural heritage that documents an era of our country’s history. This exhibition shows Iraq as a country of diversity where people from different religions, regions and ethnicities lived together in harmony for centuries.

That is what we once were, and that is what we are striving to become again.

The heritage that is currently exhibited in New York was kept hidden by the former dictatorial regime but was discovered and recovered by the Iraqi people and our American friends. While the Archive is Iraq’s property, we remain committed to the terms of the agreement which allowed these documents to be brought to the United States for restoration and exhibition. These documents – and the history that they reveal – are valuable not only for Iraq but for all humanity.

We are in discussions with our American counterparts to find a creative approach to access and sharing of these documents. These discussions will resume in the coming weeks when the Director of Iraq’s National Library and Archive visits the United States.

These documents tell us what humanity can accomplish when we live together in mutual respect. And they remind us that the desire to recover our history can be stronger than the drive to ruin it;

that the builders can triumph over the wreckers; and that, together, we can create a world with more museums and fewer Mukhabarats.

The Exhibit in New York bears witness to the history that we have recovered and the timeless truths that this history reveals.”