

## **Official Inauguration of the Department of German Language at Salahaddin University**

Following the festive event celebrating the beginning of the first semester in German studies in December 2011, the DAAD, headed by its Secretary General Dr. Dorothea Rüländ, and Dr. Ahmed Dezaye, President of Salahaddin University (SUH), invited to the inauguration of the German Department at the College of Languages at SUH on April 19, 2012. The ceremony took place in co-operation with the renowned Herder-Institute at Leipzig University, the partner institution which supports the establishment of an innovative and ambitious B.A. programme for German as a Foreign Language (DaF).

In her speech, Dr. Rüländ emphasized the singularity of the new language department as the first of its kind in Iraqi Kurdistan, and she underlined the outstanding support of the project by Salahaddin University and especially its President Dr. Ahmed Dezaye. The Vice Rector for Education and International Affairs at the University of Leipzig, Prof. Dr. Claus Altmayer, and Prof. Dr. Christian Fandrych, project leader at Herder-Institut, stressed the importance of international academic co-operation and highlighted the necessity of and the reasons for studying German in Kurdistan. The Dean of the College of Languages at SUH, Dr. Shadan Jamil Abbas, assured his full and continuous support of the project. Ms. Isabell Mering, visiting lecturer (DAAD) and director of the German programme at SUH, outlined the role of the students not only as future teachers for German language, but also as "ambassadors mediating between Germany and their home country". The first-year students contributed to the ceremony with an entertaining performance demonstrating their language competence in German.

Following the official inauguration speeches there was an opportunity to visit the new building hosting the German Department. The premises of the German Department consist of three spacious classrooms, a computer lab for innovative blended-learning projects, and the new library which was funded generously by DAAD.

The German Department will be supported by a new advisory board "German as a Foreign Language" which had its inaugural meeting on 21 April 2012. Dr. Christian Hülshörster, Head of Division 44 at DAAD (Northern Africa, Near and Middle East), invited representatives of German institutions in Erbil to the first meeting of the advisory board. This board acts as a consultative entity that offers assistance in the field of quality assurance of the study programme, helps to establish job opportunities, internships and sponsoring. During the first year, the advisory board will be headed by the Consul General of the Republic of Germany in Erbil, Mr. Rolf Ulrich.

Isabell Mering, DAAD lecturer, Salahaddin University Erbil, and Albrecht Klemm, project coordinator, University of Leipzig