

English Translation:

Huda: Neighbor relations in Iraq are actually very close because “your neighbor before your house” as we say¹. Iraqi people are known for their strong feelings and strong relations with neighbors. We say that we see our neighbor more than we see our brother; that’s why a neighbor has a special place in Iraqi family in general. Living in Iraq; people generally live close to each other. Usually there is only a wall between two houses to separate them, because the population density is high and this is the design of the country anyway, people live close to each other. As I mentioned, neighbor relations are very strong. People check on other people. If a person is a new neighbor who moved with his family to the neighborhood, you see everybody gathers around him in the first day and congratulate him for the new house and introduce themselves. They also bring food with them. It’s impossible for someone to come empty handed. They bring either food or gifts or nick-knacks or sheets. Pieces of furniture are also presented if they have extra pieces; they lend them the furniture to be used for a while and returned later. Strong help is presented to a new neighbor. After a family settles down in a new house, they nicely start to cook and distribute food to the rest of their neighbors. It is a way of introducing themselves and showing their gratitude actually. If a neighbor gets sick, you find everyone in his house asking about him. If there is a physician among the people, he would examine [the sick neighbor] for free of course. He wouldn’t charge any money because it’s shameful. They bring medicines. If they have a car, you find them giving the neighbor a ride if he needs one to the market for example. Sometimes if a family has no time but needs something urgently, you find a neighbor with a car volunteering to bring that thing. It’s a beautiful way to help in fact. Relations are very beautiful.

Heba: Tell us about the generosity of Iraqi people.

Huda: Of course, Iraqis, like all Arab countries, are known for being generous. Generosity is what distinguishes Arabs. Many matters in fact fall into the category of your question. I mean there are things that are considered inappropriate if they are done. For instance, if a man invited his friend to a restaurant for lunch, it’s inappropriate if the invited person pays for his food; no, this shouldn’t happen. You see sometimes two friends for example meeting each other in the street [by chance], a ride must be offered. If he doesn’t offer a ride, it’s offensive. Sometimes friends, males and females, pay for each other regarding transportation. In this case, it’s also inappropriate if they return the money later. By Allah, [there are] many nice things with Iraqis which make Iraqi society a unique one and give it a special flavor in fact.

¹ I.e. ask about your neighbor before you buy a house.

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