

Kurdistan Regional Government

Presidency of the Council of Ministers

Office of the Coordinator for International Advocacy



**KRG Office of the Coordinator for International Advocacy's Follow-up Report on
the Findings of the U.S. Department of State 2020 Country Reports on Human
Rights Practices: Iraq**

June 2021

Table of Content

• Executive Summary	2
• Preliminary Comments	4
• Security Apparatus of Kurdistan Region.....	4
• The Unification of Peshmerga Force.....	5
• Sinjar (Shingal) and Disputed Areas.....	5
• Border Bombardments.....	8
• Guaranteed Liberties.....	9
○ Protection from Torture.....	9
○ Protection from Arbitrary Arrest.....	10
• Protests that Have Transformed to Public Disturbances.....	10
• Reformatory Centers.....	12
• Judicial Authorities	13
• Freedom of Press and Expression.....	14
• Economic Development and Transparency.....	17
○ Investment.....	18
○ Reforms.....	19
▪ Ministry of Anfal and Martyrs Affairs.....	23
▪ Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs	23
▪ Ministry of Peshmerga.....	24
▪ Ministry of Interior	24
• Refugees and IDPs.....	25
○ Services and Protections	25
○ Freedom of Movement and Return of IDPs	26
• Women and Gender Justice.....	28
○ Laws and Legislations to Consolidate Women Rights.....	28
○ Judicial Authority	29
○ Yezidi Women	31
• Children Rights.....	31
○ Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment.....	33
• Persons with Disabilities.....	33
• Conclusion.....	34

Executive Summary

The Kurdistan Region Security Council (KRSC) is a well-established governmental institution, and, while it distributes particular obligations to provinces on the basis of decentralization, it consolidates unified security policies. The responsibilities of Kurdistan security forces have been organized according to special parliamentary laws in 2004 and 2011. The KRSC has, legally and practically, proven that it is an institutional framework and it has the responsibility of protecting everyone living in the Region.

In terms of the coordination between 70th and 80th units, both units are parts of the Ministry of Peshmerga's High Commission and their enlisted members are promoted through that ministry. In the fight against ISIL, the coordination between all the divisions and brigades were very efficient. Among the Ministry's reform plans is to reorganize and unify the remaining units; a plan that has been under an ongoing implementation process.

The Sinjar (Shingal) Agreement is expected to resolve the frictions and restore order, but it has not been executed yet. The Regional Government has not had access to the enclave since the October 2017 events, thus the political, military, and administrative situation in Shingal has been crippled ever since. The current status of the district's communities shows that some armed elements have already been integrated into the security and administrative institutions, which further hindered the execution of the agreement.

KRG supports joint coordination between Erbil and Baghdad to resolve the lingering issues in Shingal within the aforementioned agreement. Meanwhile, it backs policies that reflect the interests of the Yezidi community there. If implemented, the Sinjar (Shingal) Agreement will set a decent example to other areas in which the discretionary powers of Erbil and Baghdad overlap. There is not a clear split of jurisdictions between the Federal authorities and KRG subsequent to the October 2017 events. The Federal authorities militarily proceeded to seize further territories, following October 2017, causing security vacuums to arise in some spots in the disputed areas. This, by and large, allowed ISIL militants to operate actively and launch strikes on Peshmerga and other Iraqi forces.

KRG supports the existence of a joint task force that represents the line governmental security counterparts, and Peshmerga is an essential force whose participation in this regard is imperative to restore stability. Peshmerga has invariably protected ethnic and religious components in these areas.

Torturing detainees and obtaining confessions from them under torture is utterly prohibited. Detainees' well-being, namely mental and physical health, is a top moral priority.

Health centers and medical teams in prisons operate 24 hours, including laboratory and medicines. Necessary medical examinations are conducted for the detainees while entering the detention and transfer centers, especially the detections of infectious diseases, such as hepatitis, AIDS, tuberculosis, as well as chronic ones, such as (diabetes

and blood pressure) and special medical files are made for them. KRG has allowed international and local human rights NGOs to visit convicted prisoners and pretrial detainees.

As for the public arena and the role of the security forces in safeguarding its order: In the event that police and Asayish officers violate the terms of law and use force against the protestors, for instance, legal measures will be carried out to discipline them and sanction if needed. Kurdistan's authorities are fully committed to preserve and promote freedom of speech within civil demonstrations. The August 2020 demonstrations of Zaxo, Duhok morphed from benign rallies into violent public disturbances and control had to be taken over the situation for the sake of public order. When journalists are involved in unlawful acts, during events or causing them, it is obviously a touchy issue that has to be dealt cautiously and within the law. Incitement for public disorder, encouraging laws' disobedience and neglect, spreading false information that might lead to hatred between various population groups or harm public health in the midst of a fight against a pandemic – those are reprehensible violations who go beyond the journalistic duties and cannot hide behind any immunity given to the basic value of Freedom of Expression.

In its specific case, NRT played an adverse role amid the public disturbances by inciting violence, agitating the demonstrators to destroy public properties, and intensifying grievances between law enforcement officers and citizens, thus escalating the civil gatherings to violent riots. The news outlet has constantly received warnings from the Ministry of Youth and Culture since June 2020 for bypassing the rules and regulations.

There are over 8,000 journalists in KRI, many of whom are in the possession of various and questionable degrees and qualifications, as the law is flexible to accommodate journalists into the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate. There are also around 5,000 local NGOs that strive to maintain a thriving civil society; in addition to hundreds of INGOs that monitor and contribute to human rights status.

Since its establishment on August 1st, 2006 towards the end of 2020, the Investment Board licensed more than a thousand projects; its vast majority produced remarkable investments. Foreign investment constituted 9% of the total investments: 40 projects with \$5,71,000,000 investment value. A corruption-free environment is essential for the backbone of prosperity in Kurdistan, with zero tolerance: Within the fight against malpractice, the Commission of Integrity divides the investigation phases into three: collecting information; preliminary corroboration; criminal investigation which is carried out by the Investigation Department under the auspices of the Commission of Integrity's Investigation Court. Additionally, good governance capacity building programs are carried out with the following international key-players in Kurdistan: UNDP, UNODC, EU, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and Cash Working Group for Iraq.

All IDPs and refugees in Kurdistan benefit from access to public services and infrastructure, such as: drinking water, electricity, education, health care, roads, irrigation system, etc. on an equal basis with the local population. The KRG's policy in this regard reflects its commitment to safeguard fundamental human rights and human dignity even

under pressing circumstances. Moreover, the KRG believes that this policy is paramount to social cohesion, trust and peaceful co-existence.

The KRG has taken care of the handicapped and disabled people, and guaranteed their rights through the adoption of the law No. 22 (2011). The law stipulates the rights and privileges of persons with disabilities and special needs.

The unique case of war-related disabilities is attentively tackled as well: 10,815 persons out of the larger population number of people living with disabilities, lost organs and limbs and suffered from other physical, psychological and socio-economic damages, due to mines and UXOs. This human tragedy has been sensitively dealt with through a double-headed strategy: A draft law has been prepared to guarantee the rights of the workers in the minefields (1). A monthly support is granted to mine victims within the government budget (2). Educational curricula have been constantly adapted to accommodate students with disabilities and increase awareness within the future adults in the Kurdish society as for the special needs of the people living with disabilities.

Preliminary Comments

The United States Department of State published the “2020 Annual Human Rights Country Report: Iraq” on March 30, 2021. The report refers to key developments and challenges in sustaining and improving human rights status in the country. As far as Kurdistan Region is concerned, the report comments on freedom of expression and speech, conditions within detention and reformatory facilities, uncertain jurisdiction in the disputed areas, religious pluralism, women empowerment, fair trial, arbitrary arrests, freedom of movement, among other topics.

KRG Office of the Coordinator for International Advocacy (OCIA) followed up with the relevant governmental institutions and entities on the issues raised in the Department of State’s report. The follow-ups and consultations regarding human rights progress in the Kurdistan Region are embodied within this report.

Security Apparatus of Kurdistan Region

As far as the intelligence services structure in the Kurdistan Region is concerned, the Security Council (KRSC) is a well-established governmental institution, and, while it distributes particular obligations to provinces on the basis of decentralization, it consolidates unified security policies.

KRSC was established based on Law No. 4 of 2011. According to the law, the KRSC has the responsibility for laying out and arranging a unified security policy, and coordinating it with the relevant departments of the government. The purpose of the law is to design the principles of the security of the region and to define all the main security departments in the regional administration, which consist of security agencies, the General Directorate of Military Intelligence, and Protection and Information Agency.

The formation of this council has been effective in planning the Region’s strong security strategy to counter any potential threats against it. The KRSC’s role is essential, and it is

vital in order to strengthen safety and security of the Region in a way that is compatible with the principles of democracy and human rights.

The responsibilities of Kurdistan security forces have been organized according to special parliamentary laws in 2004 and 2011. The forces are part of legitimate and official regional institutions, and their task is to protect the people of Kurdistan from any potential danger. Therefore, the KRSC has, legally and practically, proven that it is a governmental body and it has the responsibility of protecting everyone living in the Region.

The KRSC had an essential role in the fight against ISIL, and it was in continuous coordination with the coalition forces in military operations. The KRSC support also had an essential role in Peshmerga forces' victories and liberating ISIL-held areas. KRSC and counter-terrorism force conducted many joint operations in the liberation of ISIL-held areas and the rescue of Yezidi women.

The Unification of Peshmerga Force

Peshmerga fought ISIL for four consecutive years with persistence, valor, and resilience. The battalions and divisions deployed incorporated troops regardless of the units, and they were distributed on the frontlines.

Peshmerga forces suffered heavy casualties during the war against terrorism: 1,810 Peshmerga were martyred, 10,842 were wounded, 596 were physically disabled, and 42 still remain missing.

In terms of the coordination between 70th and 80th units, they - along with other units - are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Peshmerga's High Commission and their enlisted members are promoted through that ministry. In the fight against ISIL, the coordination between the divisions and brigades were very efficient. Among the reform plans for the Ministry of Peshmerga is a special plan to reorganize and unify the 70th and 80th military units in a way that budgets and salaries are centralized under the abovementioned ministry. Command and control, consolidation, employment, logistics, training, and all other administrative work will fall under that ministry.

There are significant improvements made with regard to the 70th and 80th units' ultimate unification: To this point, as mentioned above, the project addressed integration of the payroll units, and the salary lists of the troops and commanders, retired, and disabled Peshmerga. Furthermore, the inclusive project also aims to establish a centralized approach in distributing the bodyguards on the commanders. The project includes the blueprints of these plans, and it is submitted to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Economy and Finance for implementation. Until now, 16 brigades have been unified under the auspices of the Ministry of Peshmerga

Sinjar (Shingal) and Disputed Areas

The Sinjar (Shingal) Agreement was signed between KRG and the Federal government under the auspices of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI), and it

aims to consolidate reconciliation, reconstruction, security and stability. The agreement also stipulates the withdrawal of armed elements, and the formation of independent security and administrative establishments in the enclave that solely represent the local population of Shingal.

The Sinjar (Shingal) Agreement is expected to resolve the frictions and restore order, but it has not been executed yet. For its part, KRG seeks – and has sought – a swift implementation of the agreement. The Regional Government has not had access to the enclave since the October 2017 events, thus political, military, and administrative situation in Shingal has been crippled. The current status of the towns and villages of the district shows that some armed elements already been integrated into the security and administrative institutions, which further hindered the execution of the agreement.

KRG supports joint coordination between Erbil and Baghdad to resolve the lingering issues in Shingal. Meanwhile, it backs policies that reflect the interests of the Yezidi community there.

Local community leaders in Shingal reported that there are approximately 70 Yezidi citizens confined in secret PKK prisons in the area. Furthermore, according to the relevant sources, towards July 2020, PKK fighters have abducted over 400 Yezidi female residents whose fate remains unclear. Others report the presence of other secret prisons by other armed groups. Nevertheless, KRG security forces currently have no access to Shingal enclaves. Therefore, we cannot verify the activities of these armed forces on the ground.

If implemented, the Sinjar (Shingal) Agreement will set a decent example to other areas in which the discretionary powers of Erbil and Baghdad overlap. There is not a clear split of jurisdictions between the Federal authorities and KRG subsequent to the October 2017 events. The Federal authorities militarily proceeded to seize further territories, following October 2017, causing security vacuums to arise in some spots in the disputed areas. This, by and large, allowed ISIL militants to operate actively and launch strikes on Peshmerga forces and other Iraqi forces.

KRG supports the existence of a joint task force that represents the line national and regional security counterparts, and Peshmerga is an essential force whose participation in this regard is imperative to restore stability. Peshmerga has invariably protected ethnic and religious components in these areas.

The existence of forces that do not operate solely under the authority of the Iraqi Chief Commander of the Armed Forces made the security situation more volatile, paving the way for ISIL militants to take this opportunity to conduct terrorist activities that severely damaged the stability in the disputed areas.

KRG and the Federal Government had cooperated from 2003 until 2017 to manage the security in those areas. KRG has strived to promote democratic and humanitarian principles in these areas, most important of which is the protection of coexistence

between ethnic and religious components, and it believes in the implementation of Art. 140 of the Iraqi Constitution guarantee these initiatives.

The security vacuums also damaged the economic conditions of the villagers dwelling in these areas. Due to the volatile situation in the disputed areas, villages in Kerkuk, Shingal, Kfri, Xanaqin, and Xurmatu, have had their harvested lands burned and annihilated by unknown perpetrators.

KRG has continuously asked the Federal Government to execute Art. 140 as soon as possible and it displayed its utter commitment for coordination and cooperation in this respect. KRG also asked the international community, prior the war against terrorism, to render self-rule rights for the people residing in the disputed areas, in order to eliminate the existent frictions and conflicts, and to eradicate traces of terrorism.

Coalition Forces' Aerial Activities to Combat ISIL Terrorists (August 2014 to March 2021)

Date	Airstrikes	Terrorists Killed	Heavy Weaponries Destroyed	Terrorists' Transportation Means Destroyed	Buildings and Frontlines Targets
12/8/2014 – 31/3/2021	9,331	12,053	2,604	2,299	7,256

Movements and Activities of ISIL Terrorists (First Five Months of 2021)

Area	Movements Noticed	Terrorist Acts
Xanaqin	42	16
Qaratapa	2	-
Duzxwurmaturu	10	7
Daquq	7	10
Kirkuk	29	3
Hawija	13	3
Prde	2	1
Maxmur	10	1
Salahadin	-	1
Mosul	2	2
Baghdad	-	5
Other areas	38	2
Total	156	51

Types of Terrorist Acts (First Three Months of 2021)

Types of Terrorist Activities	Number
Affirmative attacks	75
Ambush	1
Suicidal	1
Car and motorcycle planted bombs	1
Bombings	16
Aerial surveillance	-
Hideous Checkpoints	1
Artilleries	3
Rockets	4
Kidnappings	3
House Explosions	-
Total	105

Human Casualties Incurred as a Result of the Terrorist Acts (First Five Months of 2021)

Date	Martyrs	Wounded	Kidnapped	Total
1/1/2021 – 31/5/2021	183	215	21	419

Border Bombardments

Ever since the clashes and bombardments commenced, civilian impacts culminated in mass displacement, colossal proprietary damages, and the victimization of innocent civilians. Neither the Iraqi government nor the authorities from neighboring countries stepped in to reach an equitable outcome for the civilians who have had their houses demolished, their farming lands destroyed and their lives endangered.

KRG suffers from a dire economic crisis, but the efforts are ongoing to provide compensation. The Committee of Human Rights in the Kurdistan Region Parliament is in the process of writing an evaluation letter of the precise damages incurred on the inhabitants of the bordering areas. The letter will be submitted to the Presidency of the Parliament and subsequently will be referred to the Council of Ministers to assess the damages and provide the compensations accordingly.

The stance of KRG with regard to the continuation of these bombardments has been clear. These attacks endanger the lives of Kurdistan citizens, destroy their properties, annihilate the villagers' agrarian lands, impairs civilian infrastructure and damages the forests. Moreover, these actions have imposed displacement on many of the villagers, and killed civilians along with dozens of casualties. Additionally, due to the resuming clashes, more than 800 villages remain without inhabitation, reconstruction, and services.

KRG has requested the PKK and other armed elements to discontinue their provocations against the neighboring states from the KRG territories. Also, it calls upon neighboring countries to consider that civilians inhabit the border areas, which are currently exposed to bombardments; hence they are forced to flee their homes and abandon their farming lands.

Border Bombardments (First Five Months of 2021)

Date	Airstrikes	Artilleries	Boots-on-the-Ground	Total
1/1/2021 – 31/5/2021	79	156	5	240

Guaranteed Liberties

Protection from Torture

The Iraqi Constitution, Article 37(1), provides the following foundations on liberty: A) The liberty and dignity of man shall be protected; B) No person may be kept in custody or investigated except according to a judicial decision; C) All forms of psychological and physical torture and inhuman treatment are prohibited. Any confession made under force, threat or torture shall not be relied on and the victim shall have the right to seek compensation for material and moral damages incurred in accordance with the Law No. 20. In the Kurdistan Region, the authorities prohibit the use of torture and are committed to investigating allegations of ill-treatment and abuse within all prisons in the Region. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA), under Law No 7, Art I, 27 and 28, permits disciplinary punishment only to deter and reform detainees who do not abide by the rules and regulations of the prison.

Torturing detainees and obtaining confessions from them under torture is utterly prohibited. The torture of a detainee or convicted person or any inhumane action against them is a crime under Art 333 of the Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 as amended. According to this law, any defendant tortured during interrogation is entitled to complain against the person who tortured him. Accordingly, each detainee can bring any case through the prison administration or the prosecutor and his relatives during their visit or through human rights organizations about torture by the competent authorities. Any confession made under torture is deemed null, and the perpetrators will be punished by law.

Judicial investigator from the Ministry of Interior accompanied with members from the General Prosecutor’s Office, are provided an office in General Asayish building to observe and pursue cases involving torture of detainees. This practice is strictly prohibited, and no torture case has ever been recorded. Under Art 333 of the amended Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 and Art 9 (3) of Iraqi Constitution, every detainee has

the right to issue a complaint after which the case ought to undergo investigation. However, no complaint has been issued throughout 2020.

Protection from Arbitrary Arrests

KRG asserts that arbitrary arrests and detentions are alien to the values by which this government rules, and that legal proceedings are accordingly implemented regardless of the circumstances.

The Iraqi Code of Criminal Procedure No 23, 1971 (CCP) and Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 has been kept and became part of the criminal legislation applicable in the Kurdistan Region. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Region has legal obligations under international human rights treaties, laws and customary laws, which include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); this protects individual's basic rights including the right for protection against arbitrary arrest. According to the Iraqi Penal Code, No. 111 (1969), after the order of arrest from the court, the accused will be detained by the court and all the legal actions will be taken according to the Iraqi Code of Criminal Procedures No. (23), 1971. Furthermore, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) does not have the authority to arrest anyone without a court order.

According to Article (19), paragraph 12/1 of the Iraqi Constitution, arbitrary arrest is forbidden and the power of arrest is preserved by the judiciary.

Kurdistan Parliament Law No. 11 of 2010 authorized the organization of demonstrations in the Kurdistan Region. Accordingly, people are constitutionally and legally allowed to protest. People are permitted to express their views and deliver their demands, as long as they remain legally bound and follow some procedures in the benefit of common good and avoid violence and vandalism.

Law No. 11 ratifies the demonstrations according to the international standards and carefully identifies elements, such as: time, duration, location, type and the demands of the protesters. This means preserving the safety and security of the people and the protestors. Therefore, any intended protest must obtain an official permission from governmental entities.

Protests that Have Transformed to Public Disturbances

According to the laws on demonstration in the KRI, it is the full responsibility of the security forces to maintain peace and to not allow the escalation of aggression by and towards the protesters alike. The law enforcement forces must prevent chaos and vandalism that might threaten the lives, property, or resources of the citizens. In case of violations of the law, such as violence or extension of the designated protest duration, security forces are legally obliged to intervene and end the protests in a civil manner. Similarly, the relevant laws prohibit the security forces from abusing its authority and using excessive force against the protestors.

In the event that police and law enforcement officers violate the terms of law and use force against the protestors, legal measures will be carried out to discipline them and sanction, if needed.

Authorities are fully committed to preserve and promote freedom of speech within civil demonstrations and vigils aimed to enhance social welfare and public good.

Nevertheless, in some instances the demonstrations are hijacked by unknown groups for unidentified purposes; this by and large leads to the divergence of peaceful gatherings to public disturbances. For example, the demonstration that took place in Zaxo, August 2020 was supposedly controlled and led by truck drivers who felt that the opening of Ibrahim Khalil crossing point with Turkey, will allow the drivers from Turkey to deliver passengers to stations inside the Kurdistan Region, a step that would expectedly damage their labor. However, unknown perpetrators soon chanted PKK slogans and started to fire gunshots towards the police and security forces, turning the protest into an act of public disturbance that involved vandalism and physical abuses of law enforcement individuals and civilians.

KRG confirmed previously that 61 persons from police, security forces and 4 civilians were injured. 18 were arrested who had firearms in their possession amid the riot. The gun fires of the latter resulted in the injury of a child. Moreover, 26 police and civilian cars were damaged, in addition to other public and private properties. It is noteworthy that while the gathering was reportedly aimed to convey the rights of the drivers, only 4 drivers were identified during the investigations.

It is noteworthy that no one who carried the instruments relevant to her/his journalistic career, nor if s/he was covering it, was arrested amid the riot. The persons arrested were involved in the riot outside their journalistic capacities, pushing for public unrest.

In a more or less similar pattern of the demonstration in Zaxo, several protesters were held in Duhok in May 2020 for breaking government regulations during the grieving spikes of Covid-19 victims. Nineteen people were held. In addition to many others, they were arrested, due to the violation of government regulations concerning Coronavirus outbreak, due to which the protest had not been given permission by the Duhok Governorate. Essentially, no protester was wearing masks and gloves, nor social distancing measures were implemented.

Therefore, the Duhok Police asked the crowds to dismantle, but the protesters did not comply. However, all 19 individuals were released on bail afterwards. Other protesters were nonetheless arrested based on individual lawsuits submitted by police officers for injuries. According to the Duhok's Appellate Court, the protesters were arrested merely for violation of government regulation - as stipulated in Art 240 in the Iraqi Penal Code - not due to committing a misdemeanor or a crime. The aforementioned article enables the government to initiate legal proceedings with the violators if enacted regulations or instructions were violated.

A self-proclaimed journalist was arrested amid the protest, identifying himself as one only in the final stages of investigation; after which he was solely released (not on bail). Generally, the arrested protesters were not journalists; they were suspected of arranging a riot. Otherwise, the Kurdistan Press Law is fully active and it is legally implemented.

The protest in Duhok was mainly driven by political aims. Their permission to arrange a demonstration was declined as they had failed to submit the basic details of the activity, i.e. names, agenda, duration, etc. The Duhok Governorate Council illustrated that this information was necessary in order to provide and maintain security for the peaceful protest. Essentially, no claims by Teachers Union or a group of teachers had been submitted beforehand. In fact, the majority of the protesters came from outside Duhok province.

Moreover, on the basis of witness testimonies and evidence gathered by the security apparatus, PKK affiliates influenced the protest in the phase of its preparation.

The Duhok Investigating Magistrate issued a warrant to arrest Mr. Badal Abdulbaqi Abubakr on the basis of the Protest Law No 10. Mr. Badal attempted to call for a demonstration while the Coronavirus remained an imminent threat. The demonstration would have posed a danger to stimulate the spread of Covid-19 virus, and it was a clear violation of KRG restrictive regulations to contain the viral disease. Mr. Badal was charged with Article 2 of KRI-enacted Law No. 6 of 2008 for the Misuse of Electronic Devices.

Furthermore, upon the request of his five lawyers, their client was released on bail on May 31. During his detention, Mr. Badal had access to his lawyers and he was frequently contacted by his family.

Reformatory Centers

Health centers and medical teams in prisons operate 24 hours, including laboratory and medicines. Necessary medical examinations are conducted for the detainees while entering the detention and transfer centers, especially the detections of infectious diseases, such as hepatitis, AIDS, tuberculosis, as well as chronic ones, such as (diabetes and blood pressure) and special medical files are made for them.

KRG has allowed international and local human rights NGOs to visit convicted prisoners and pretrial detainees. Hundreds of visits have been conducted. KRG has been pursuing its program to improve prison conditions through the construction or planned establishment of new detention facilities, in addition to establishing rehabilitation programs.

KRG has generally been proactive in investigating allegations of abuse or ill-treatment in its detention facilities. Every detainee can file any lawsuit through the prison administration or the public prosecutor and his family during their visit, or through human rights organizations.

Number of Inmates in the Correctional Centers

	Directorates	Number of Prisoners
1	Directorate of Reformatory of Women and Juveniles – Erbil	251
2	Directorate of Reformatory of Women and Juveniles – Sulaimani	102
3	Directorate of Reformatory of Women and Juveniles – Duhok	76
4	Directorate of Reformatory of Adults – Erbil	2120
5	Directorate of Reformatory of Adults – Sulaimani	1050
6	Directorate of Reformatory of Adults – Duhok	2416

Only inmates of 23 of age – or above – are admitted to the adult reformatory centers of adults. Juveniles and women reformatory centers categorize the victims according to age and gender. In both types of the correctional centers, juveniles and adults are kept in different rooms and facilities.

The convicted individuals will be transferred to the reformatory centers for adults or women and juveniles’ centers based on a judge order. According to the rehabilitation system No. 1 of 2008, each convict has the right to request leave every 3 months on the condition that they complete one-third of their sentence (it should not be less than a year).

This means that they can ask for leave 4 times a year, and each time the leave is 5 day excluding the travel days, which makes it 7 days in total. This decision does not apply to some heavy crimes, such as terror-related crimes, crimes that threaten Kurdistan Region’s national security, murder crimes, kidnappings, and participating in a murder. The inmate will be granted leave based on a report by a social advisor that proves the life of the inmate is not threatened outside. Another type of leave is granted for the inmates who have done a great job in services provided in the reformatory or if they achieved great academic performance during their studies in the reformatories.

KRG continues to collaborate with UN agencies – UNAMI in particular – to ensure the underpinning of values that are cornerstones for good governance, democracy, and rule of law. KRG is committed to the preservation of the rights of the detainees. UNAMI has had unlimited access to the detention facilities.

Judicial Authorities

One of the most important guarantees to take into account human rights is the existence of an independent judicial system that works with professionalism and impartiality, a body that Kurdistan Region proudly embraces, and which underpins laws that do justice to all victims, the accused, and society as a whole.

In the Kurdistan Region, the judicial branch oversees professional security services that work to uncover crimes and bring them to justice. There is also an independent, professional and impartial Public Prosecution Office, whose mission is to apply the law and monitor the legality of all state agencies in ultimate transparency and independence, in accordance with the provisions of the laws in force. KRG guarantees a fair execution of domestic laws, and the consolidation of international norms as far as the judiciary is concerned.

KRG stresses that there is a clear split between the jurisdiction of the court and of the government. KRG respects the independence of the judiciary, committed to a coherent check-and-balance system, and cannot interfere in the judicial process.

Freedom of Press and Expression

There are over 8,000 journalists in KRI, many of whom are in the possession of various and questionable degrees and qualifications, as the law is flexible to accommodate journalists into the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate. There are also around 5,000 local NGOs in the Kurdistan Region that strive to maintain a thriving civil society; in addition to hundreds of INGOs that monitor and contribute to human rights status. Few cases should not be perceived as erratic, because journalists will face these laws when they violate them while they are not in their journalistic career capacity, or if the violations involve legal procedures prescribed by other laws. Out of these instances, Kurdistan Parliament-enacted Press Law will be enforced.

The laws so far deployed included the Law of the Misuse of Electronic Devices and articles from the Iraqi Penal Code, in addition to regulations regarding the Coronavirus containment. None of the laws and regulations was enforced on the basis of critics of the government. Hemin Mamand, for example, shared misinformation on social media by arousing suspicion on the spread of Coronavirus in KRG detention centers. He also encouraged citizens to violate the regulations enforced following the outbreak. Mamand was also charged based on Art 432 and Art 433 from Iraqi Penal Code, which respectively accused him of libel and defamation. Still, though some were detained for limited hours-due to the necessary investigations-no one has been detained for a long time or sentenced in this respect.

Everyone in the Kurdistan Region enjoys the freedom to express her or his opinion and to demonstrate it within the framework of the laws and regulations in force. Hence, the conduct of demonstrations should be in line with the preservation of others' lives and private and public properties. During the demonstrations, Journalists have been granted the right to cover demonstrations and gatherings of citizens.

In the Zaxo protest in August 2020, however, it is noteworthy that no one who carried the instruments relevant to her/his journalistic career, nor if s/he was covering it, was arrested amid the riot. The journalists arrested were involved in the riot outside their journalistic capacities, pushing for public unrest. With regards to NRT staff, Faruq Omar, leadership member of the New Generation movement, Jahangir Sndi the head of NRT office in Zaxo, and Ahmad Said Abdulrahman (Ahmad Zaxoyi), NRT reporter, were arrested. Ahmad Zaxoyi was released on bail on August 30. Zaxoyi had been arrested on the basis of a court warrant and had access to his lawyer.

There are allegations that some journalists - including the Zaxo protesters – were arrested in Duhok province without the proper due process of law at that time. This claim remains unfounded. Excluding the already clarified details of the public disturbance in Zaxo, 4 other individuals were arrested, subsequent to opening lawsuits against them.

Similarly, in December 7, 2020, the main headquarters of NRT network in Sulaimani was subjected to a temporary closure amid violent protests in the Kurdistan Region. The week-long closure took place subsequent to consistent violations of laws and regulations. The decision was made by the KRG's Ministry of Youth and Culture, following a plea from security services and the evaluation of legal aspects.

KRG was suffering from dire economic pressure that year, primarily due to budget-cutting and suspension of salaries, in addition to the coronavirus epidemic. As a result, the citizens and public servants arranged demonstrations and protests which often yielded to violence, i.e. vandalism, burning political parties' offices, and civil unrest. Furthermore, there were a number of individuals that used guns and detrimental objects against the police forces in Priamagrun district. Regretfully, a police officer was injured.

The investigations found that several outlawed persons had concealed unlicensed weapons in their homes with the intention of using it during the riot, and a number of political parties and organizations had been involved to divert the directions of the protests into the realm of violence.

Unfortunately, NRT played an adverse role amid the public disturbances by inciting violence, agitating the demonstrators to destroy public properties, and intensifying grievances between law enforcement officers and citizens, thus escalating the civil gatherings to violent riots. Moreover, NRT's rhetoric did not serve civic values. Being the mouthpiece of an opposition party that had constantly been calling for the overthrow of the government, NRT frequently emphasized on ousting KR's democratically elected government through questionable and undemocratic means. NRT exploited the ongoing civil unrest to push the government into the avalanche, without taking people's lives into consideration.

NRT acted in contrast to the principles by which the citizens of Kurdistan live peacefully, and resorted to inflaming political and social frictions that could not be settled down if the proper legal actions were not being taken.

The news outlet has constantly received warnings from the Ministry of Youth and Culture since June 2020 for bypassing the rules and regulations. On that basis, the aforementioned ministry issued a decree to temporarily close NRT stations and suspend its broadcasting both on TV and on social media. NRT was closed due to plain violations of Article 3 (3) of TV and Radio Regulations of the Ministry of Youth and Culture. Despite its violation of the Ministry's legal framework numerous times, NRT's license was not suspended. Their broadcasting station was temporarily closed. Furthermore, no reporter or correspondent of NRT is mistreated or detained.

The Ministry of Culture and Youth in the Kurdistan Regional Government organizes the monitoring and organization of television programs in accordance with Instructions (1) of 2014 as follows:

- 1) Keeping away from destroying the social dimension of the family.
- 2) Keeping away from defamation and insults.
- 3) Taking into account the age of children in broadcasting television programs.
- 4) Not to distort the Kurdish language and restrict the main sources of the Kurdish language.
- 5) TV programs should not encourage violence

Demonstrations of civil servants and unsatisfied citizens erupted on December 2, 2020, amid a severe economic crisis, primarily due to the budget cut and suspension of salaries by the Federal Authorities. The protesters rallied for public salaries in Sulaimani, Halabja, Raparin, Piramagrun, Garmian, Darbandixan, and Khurmal. The protests soon morphed from benign rallies into violent public disturbances.

A group of outlawed people still aim to deform the legitimate demands of the protesters. They set fire to several public buildings, including directorates of traffic, civil status, and electricity, among others. Leadership and some political parties' headquarters were also burned and looted.

The Sulaimani's provincial administration announced on December 3, 2020 that any meeting and gathering was not allowed without the prior consent of the Provincial High Security Committee, and that the media channels were required to cover the events in the framework of the permitted laws, and avoid agitating confrontation and violence. The escalation of the unrest led to the killing of 9 people, including civil security staff members. Moreover, about 60 police officers and dozens of protesters are injured. In Penjwin, the municipality building and several facilities in the Bashmax crossing-point were set on fire. The headquarters of six political parties were also targeted by burning, firing shots, and looting. Taq Taq's governmental and organizational buildings were attacked as well.

UNAMI hailed on violence, which has been raging in recent days with protests in areas of Sulaimani province, killing and injuring a number of people and destroying public

property: “The right to peaceful protest must be protected and it is imperative that demonstrations remain peaceful”.

A 24-hours curfew was imposed in Sulaimani province to prevent escalations. KRG security and administrative units painstakingly strove to restore order and prevent violence. The Provincial High Security Committee announced that “from now on, all kinds of unlicensed gatherings and protests, as well as the damaging of public and private properties - which serve people - are banned”.

Some media outlets received warnings to consider the volatility of the situation and no legal action was taken against them.

Regarding the freedom of movement, the journalists are authorized to reach anywhere in the areas that fall under the jurisdiction of KRG. No journalist will have her or his equipment confiscated. Furthermore, journalists are protected by law and in case of threat or intimidation; they are entitled to file a lawsuit, as any victim of such a felony.

Economic Development and Transparency

Investment

Investment is the backbone of Kurdistan Region’s economic prosperity and the existing peaceful environment. It has played an essential role in actualizing sustainable development, abundant job opportunities, and a routinized maneuver of local and foreign capital. In this respect, KRG has facilitated investment opportunities for successful entrepreneurs in accordance with law and merit.

The 9th cabinet of KRG has made unprecedented progress in terms of investments, embarking on reviving the sectors of agriculture, industry, tourism, health and other aspects of public sectors; thus, stepping into efficient diversification of economic resources despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the dire economic crisis the region went through in 2020.

Since its establishment on August 1, 2006 towards the end of 2020, the Investment Board licensed 1,085 projects, among which 940 licenses produced remarkable investments while 145 licenses were terminated due to failure in compliance with the law and the instructions of the Investment Board.

Investment Projects’ Distribution on the Basis of Governorate (License not Terminated)

Governorate	Number of Investment Projects	Invested Capital	Percent of Total Investment in the Region
Erbil	416	\$29,523,000,000	%56
Sulaimani	261	\$16,686,000,000	%32
Duhok	263	\$6,398,000,000	%12

The foreign investment constituted 9% of the total investments and reached 40 projects with the investment value of \$5,71,000,000; the domestic investments consisted of 871 projects with \$43,830,000,000 investment value and constituted %83 of total investment; and the hybrid investments have been 29 with \$3,706,000,000 worth of investments and constituted %8 of the total investments.

Foreign Direct Investments

	Country	Number of Projects	Sector	Capital (\$)	%
1	UAE	2	Residential and Tourism	\$2,527,216,000	%49.71
2	Lebanon	9	Banking, Tourism, Trade, Residential, Industry	\$1,016,402,686	%19.99
3	Turkey	15	Education, Residential, Industry, Health, and Tourism	\$1,229,840,673	%24.19
4	UK	1	Agriculture and Residential	\$12,500,000	%0.25
5	Newzealand	1	Residential and Tourism	\$98,189,750	%1.93
6	USA	4	Trade, Tourism, Residential, and Industry	\$115,822,925	%2.28
7	Germany	2	Health and Industry	\$24,355,712	%0.48
8	Sweden	1	Residential	\$17,372,000	%0.34
9	Kuwait	1	Industry	\$10,570,000	%0.21
10	Syria	1	Tourism	\$8,300,000	%0.16
11	Lebanon + France	1	Education	\$70,82,207	%0.14
12	Russia	1	Trade	\$2,805,670	%0.06
13	Georgia	1	Industry	\$600,000	%0.01
Total		40		\$5,071,057,723	%100

Aside from the above figures, tremendous joint investments have also been carried out. Countries such as South Korea, Egypt, China, Spain, Jordan, Pakistan, France, Sweden, Germany, and Turkey - in coordination with the government - executed enormous projects in industry, agriculture, communication, tourism, and residential sectors. The total worth of these hybrid investments touched \$3,706,156,298

Precisely 238 projects were conducted in the industrial sector with the value of \$18,508,000,000; hence industry is ranked first in the KRG investment index. About 184 projects were carried out in the residential sector, 162 in tourism, 163 in trade, 59 in health, 32 in agriculture, 4 in banks, 44 in education, 4 in communication, 14 in services, 3 in transportation, among others. Between 2007 and 2018, 1929 custom exemption documents were issued by the Investment Board in order to incentivize investments and prosperity.

To promote efforts in preventing the waste of public funds, the Investment Board terminated the license of 145 pending projects that collectively seized 17,737 acres of lands but did not initiate investments. About 1182 non-implemented projects were rejected due to noncompliance with the integrity calibers. The latter category had 9,160 acres. Hence, the total lands repossessed to the public equals 26,898 acres. The licenses were reallocated to other investors to commence the projects as soon as possible.

In the course of a year, the 9th Cabinet licensed 93 projects with \$2,502,000,000 worth of investment. Moreover, 531 pending projects have been approved with the value of \$11,675,000,000 in Erbil, Sulaimani, Duhok, Halabja, Garmian, and Raparin. The industrial sector has the lion share in the allocated amounts of capital.

The unprecedented progress in investment is accompanied by transparency, equality of opportunity, competitive business environment, coherent and integral policies, and facilitations. The Kurdistan Region is a safe haven for businesses to grow and prosper. The consolidated safety and stability attracted foreign countries to heavily invest in the local markets. Meanwhile, domestic investments are rapidly increasing.

Reforms

The Commission of Integrity in the Kurdistan Region adopts four-year strategies to combat corruption. On February 10, 2020, a committee was formed to revise and adjust the strategy for the next four years. Following the preparation of the first draft, the strategy was submitted to the KRG Council of Ministers, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for comments and observations.

The Commission of Integrity signed a memorandum of understanding with UNDP on December 5, 2019 for technical assistance and expertise. The first meeting was held on September 1, 2020, to consolidate an inclusive and everlasting project that promotes transparency and accountability. The European Union (EU) is also a party to the project.

The endeavor of fighting corruption and improving transparency is stipulated in the amended Law of the Integrity Committee No 3 (2011), and the Regulation No 2 (2016) peculiar to financial disclosure. Art (5) of Law No 3 and Art (2) of Regulations No 2, sequentially subject senior public and military officials into filling out a form with the properties they own along with their families' financial assets. Accordingly, the Committee starts to evaluate the authenticity of the answers, and investigate illicit enrichment, bribery, misuse of public funds, nepotism, among others.

The targeted officials include the President and the Prime Minister - along with their deputy -ministers and their deputies, head of security departments, general directors, and military officials, among others. Once an act of corruption is verified, the Committee maintains the rights to publicly announce it, and submit the collected evidence to the judiciary to initiate legal proceedings. The official who fails to submit the form or doesn't comply with the instructions will face legal consequences, ranging from 3 million-100 million IQD fine to 3 months imprisonment.

In the longer narrative, the Commission of Integrity divides the investigation phases into three: collecting information; preliminary corroboration; and the criminal investigation which is carried out by the Investigation Department under the auspices of the Commission of Integrity's Investigation Court. In 2020 in the Kurdistan Region, 100 pieces of information were collected, 96 were verified by the Investigation Department to involve corruption or mismanagement, and 280 legal cases were opened of which 103 have been transferred to the relevant courts.

General Statistics (1\1\2019 to 25\12\2020)

	Judicial Decisions	Total	Executed	Not Executed
1	Decisions to be Present Before the Court	241	143	98
2	Decisions to Arrest	88	66	22
3	Total of Judicial Decisions	329	209	120

Statistics of Corruption Cases on the basis of Legal Materials Identified by the Investigation Department (1\1\2019 to 25\12\2020)

	Legal Material	Number of Cases
1	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 456	2
2	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 240	1
3	Procedural Law, Art 119	1

4	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 307	23
5	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 310	11
6	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 312	4
7	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 316	17
8	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 323	1
9	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 330	7
10	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 331	18
11	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 332	2
12	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 340	46
13	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 341	4
14	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 276	1
15	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 318	1
16	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 335	6
17	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 298 and 289	2
18	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 317	1
19	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 340	7
20	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 315	24
21	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 330	2
22	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 290	1
23	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 333	6
24	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 307	8
25	Iraqi Penal Code, Art 329	1
26	Total	197

Statistics of Charged Suspects on the basis of Governmental Positions (1/1/2020 t0 25/12/2020)

	Government Position	Number of Cases
1	Minister	2
2	Deputy Minister	3
3	Member of Parliament	1
4	General Managers	3
5	University Presidents and Professors	3
6	Deputy General Managers	1
7	Head of Municipalities	4
8	Managers	16
9	Judicial Experts	1
10	Military Commanders	8
11	Security Commanders	3
12	Police Investigators	1
13	Police	11
14	Employees	144
15	Peshmergas	1
16	Contractors' Representatives	1
17	Farmers	1
18	Other Citizens	44
Total		248

The Estimated Amount of Public Funds that are Wasted to Corruption, Seized, and Retrieved

Governorate	Estimated Waste Due to Corruption (IQD)	Value of the Seized Money	Value of the Retrieved Money (IQD)
Erbil	72,537,000	-----	30,297,000

Sulaimani	21,294,654,770	-----	147,726,100
Duhok	718,187,000	-----	27,624,000
	22,085,378,770		205,647,100

Legal Cases in both the Criminal and Misdemeanor Courts

Governorate	Misdemeanor Court	Criminal Court	In-Process	Rejected	Ruled	Total
Erbil	18	46	32	22	10	64
Sulaimani	24	33	43	7	7	57
Duhok	21	53	48	1	25	74
Total	63	132	123	30	42	195

The Reform Law No. 2 (2020) was passed in the Kurdistan Parliament last year in order to harness efforts to revise public servants' payroll, pensions, and financial privileges. The High Committee to Implement the Reform Law, the Commission of Integrity and the Financial Monitoring Diwan, are authorized to investigate the violations.

Ministry of Anfal and Martyrs Affairs

Procedures No. 8 and No. 9 were issued in 2020 to precisely identify the rights and privileges of the political prisoners, and the families of Anfal and the martyrs respectively. Furthermore, two instructions have been issued in 2021 in this regard. On January 6, 2021, the Ministerial Decision No. 48 was issued to terminate the grants of 13,282 ghost or unqualified custodians of Anfal victims. Their payments were 996,150,000 IQD on a monthly basis.

Moreover, an authorized ministerial committee was formed on April 16, 2020 to corroborate the documents presented by people who acquired the status of political prisoners. A political prisoner in the Kurdistan Region refers to people who were intimidated and persecuted under the previous Iraqi regimes due to their political affiliations and national sentiments. There are 23,769 citizens who are recognized as political prisoners. The above-mentioned committee currently investigates this process and strives to exclude the unqualified persons on the payroll.

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

The ministry intensified its efforts in 2020 to eradicate the underserved persons - who registered themselves as handicapped while their body has been intact - from the government's payroll. In coordination with the IT Department of the Presidency of Council Of Ministers, 667 out of 13249 individuals were disqualified from receiving salaries. Additionally, MOLSA adopted Procedure No. 425 to enhance the social well-fare of people in need. The procedure is based on a project that reflects intensive efforts by MOLSA, with technical and financial assistance provided by UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and Cash Working Group for Iraq.

Ministry of Peshmerga

The High Committee to Implement the Reform Law has intensified efforts to launch a sweeping prohibition on financial mismanagement and waste of funds within the Ministry of Peshmerga. For this end, the ministry has transferred the salaries of the retorted, deceased, and disabled Peshmergas to the payroll of the Ministry of Finance and Economy. Moreover, the documents of the ISIL war martyrs have been transferred to the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal, which are numbered 1047. Simultaneously, the Reform Law stipulates a mechanism to unify the salaries of Peshmerga forces in one payroll. These steps are accompanied by an inclusive reform in removing the recipients of more than one salary and the ghost employees; in addition to reorganizing the financial privileges.

Number of Guards, Peshmergas, and Drivers Assigned to the Ministry's Commanders

No.	Position	Number of Peshmerga, Guards, and Drivers Assigned
1	Brigade Commander	6
2	Brigade Deputy Commander	4
3	Battalion Commander	4
4	Battalion Deputy Commander	2
5	Brigade Commission	2

The relevant departments of the Ministry of Peshmerga met with the KRG's Deputy Prime Minister's representative and Coalition Forces to consolidate reforms within the Ministry. Among 28 points recommended by the Coalition Forces, eight points were agreed upon as a start to commence the reforms according to the Reform Law.

Ministry of Interior

The High Committee to Implement the Reform Law authorized the MOI to financially bring Zeravani commandership and the special security teams under its auspices. These units have received their salaries from the Ministry of Peshmerga, and their rank promotions have been conducted through that ministry. However, henceforth their promotions and salaries will be fully administered by the MOI.

Furthermore, the above-mentioned committee, in cooperation with the MOI, has submitted a draft bill to the Council of Ministers that legally limits the number of bodyguards that government officials can hire or appoint.

Refugees and IDPs

Services and Protections

The KRG proudly received almost two million IDPs with a large number of them being Christian, Yezidi, Shabak, Fylis, Kakais, Zoroastrians, and Sabeian Manadis, and other ethnicities and religions from the Nineveh plains. Despite the dire economic situation and security difficulties that were occurring in the region, the KRG has managed to guarantee the protection of all residents within, since the preservation of these minorities' rights are one of the KRG's top priorities.

All IDPs and refugees in the Kurdistan Region benefit from access to public services and infrastructure (such as drinking water, electricity, education, health care, roads, irrigation system, etc.) on an equal basis with the local population. The KRG's policy in this regard reflects its commitment to safeguard fundamental human rights and human dignity even under pressing circumstances. Moreover, the KRG believes that this policy is paramount to social cohesion, trust and peaceful co-existence. KRG is committed to uphold its high humanitarian standards and continues to serve the displaced populations. KRG has:

- allocated land for construction of camps;
- contributed to the construction of camps and connecting camps to power grids and local infrastructure;
- introduced civil administration in the camps and provided security services;
- reinforced technical and legal services to combat sexual and gender-based violence in and outside the camps;
- opened additional shifts at local schools to make schooling in Arabic available to displaced children;
- currently 58% of refugees' children and 91% of IDPs children are enrolled in formal and informal education;
- facilitated reunification of children with their families;
- granted access for all IDPs and refugees to public health services, including mobilizing emergency mobile clinics and medical teams;
- introduced simplified procedures for free movement of humanitarian personnel;
- introduced exemption from customs duty and mechanisms to fast track customs clearance for humanitarian supplies;

- publicly called on local communities and all sections of society to welcome and
- assist the IDPs as their guests;
- and introduced other necessary measures.

To further facilitate legal needs of refugees and IDPs, an appellate court has been opened in Sheikhan area for following up with for IDPs who are from Ninevah and Mosul areas, therefore, when people from Mosul have a civil problem within the Ninevah border areas, they visit appellate court of Sheikhan. If a refugee or IDP commits a crime or faces an issue in Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaymaniyah areas, and if a lawsuit was filed for that end, the court process will take place in the court where that crime has taken place according to active laws in Kurdistan and Iraq. Whoever feels oppressed has the right to file a lawsuit and submit it to a special court in a written manner, and their case will be finalized before court whether they are Kurdish citizens IDPs or refugees. Similar to all the citizens in Kurdistan, IDPs and refugees have access to all civil rights such as purchasing and selling cars, getting car license, owning residence, renting houses, and getting necessary documents from KR relevant departments.

For all the refugee and IDP groups, the KRG has adopted a rights-based policy by granting refugee and IDPs residency and work permits. KRG is committed to reinforce its efforts to provide equal job opportunities for all people in the Kurdistan Region. KRG has opened vocational training centers to train the IDPs and refugees to enable them to find jobs in the market or establish their own businesses inside camps and within the host communities.

MOI holds a clear and consistent position that return must take place under safe, voluntary and dignified conditions for the displaced populations. KRG has worked hard to ensure a successful and transparent return process with the best interest of the civilian population in mind. In compliance with International Humanitarian Law and in order to guarantee the safe, voluntary and principled return of displaced populations, the KRG has not endorsed any position to pressure refugees and IDPs to return. However, the KRG has and will continue to welcome the return of IDPs to their places of origin and continue to do everything in its power to support and facilitate their voluntary return. KRG's policy has been consistent throughout this humanitarian crisis as it is in line with the KRG's vision for the safe return of people to their homes.

Freedom of Movement and Return of IDPs

IDPs and refugees residing in host communities have complete freedom of movement within the Kurdistan Region. Camp residents have freedom to travel to and from work, to access education, health care and other public services and visit friends and relatives. All IDPs and refugees have been granted residency permits and enjoy free movement across the Kurdistan Region and even refugees are allowed to visit their families inside Syria and return to the Kurdistan Region without restriction. This KRG policy is in recognition of the complex nature of protracted displacement and the difficulties that displaced families face when trying to return home.

Regarding Rabia and its surrounding villages, there are infiltrations of members of the organization from Syria to the lands of Rabia and Zummar, and there are ISIL sleeping cells that hinder the process of returning part of the families. Furthermore the presence of Peshmerga forces in Rabia is indispensable for local peace and stability, and this initiative will incentivize the families to return to their homes.

Excluding Jidria, in which no ISIL elements were identified, latest data in July suggested that roughly 37 families out of 120 families in Qahira village, 20 out of 170 families in Sufiya, 70 out of 350 families in Suadia, and 80 out of 300 families in Mahmoudia, have had links with ISIL. Nevertheless, there is a consistent coordination between KRG and Mosul governorate to continue the return of the remaining IDPs, and KRG's MOI supervises this coordination. The IDPs submit a request to the host governorate to return to their homes, and afterwards the request is forwarded to the relevant parties for approval.

The overwhelming majority of the returning families are still concerned about the security situation there, and the destruction of their properties in the liberation process in 2016 and 2017. These concerns have been addressed in the meeting between KRG and Mosul Governorate in February 2020, in which they agreed that the returnees should be registered and documented, the security situation in the area should be assessed, and the process should be coordinated by relevant authorities.

Population return to villages surrounding Zummar (2018):

- Abu Jana – 500 families have returned (ethnically Arab)
- Al Samut – 300 families have returned (ethnically Arab)
- Al Bardiya – 320 families have returned, 17 forcibly moved by IS
- (ethnically Kurdish)
- Al Jazruniya – 246 families have returned (ethnically Arab)
- Al Jisa – 404 families have returned (ethnically Kurdish)
- Tel Abu Zahir – 99 families have returned (ethnically Kurdish)
- Qay al Riyah – 180 families have returned (ethnically Arab)
- Al Mifri – 373 families have returned, 44 forcibly moved by IS (ethnically
- Kurdish)
- Sahel al Hamd – 64 families have returned (ethnically Kurdish)
- Al Soufiya – 200 families have returned (ethnically Arab)

KRG's MOI holds a clear and consistent position that return must take place under safe, voluntary and dignified conditions for the displaced populations. KRG has worked hard to ensure a successful and transparent return process with the best interest of the civilian population in mind. In compliance with International Humanitarian Law and in order to guarantee the safe, voluntary and principled return of displaced populations, the KRG has not endorsed any position to pressure refugees and IDPs to return. However, the KRG has and will continue to welcome the return of IDPs to their places of origin and continue to do everything in its power to support and facilitate their voluntary return. KRG's policy

has been consistent throughout this humanitarian crisis as it is in line with the KRG's vision for the safe return of people to their homes.

Women and Gender Justice

KRG High Council of Women Affairs oversees the implementation of Resolution No. 1325, and it already coordinated the governmental agencies to advance it consistently with a devoted budget.

The KRG through the Supreme Council for Women's Affairs and the United Nations agencies (Established the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women) in the region, this was approved in accordance with the decision No. 8 of the Council of Ministers of the region on (19/9/2012) and lasted for five years (2012- 2016). After that, the strategy was updated in 2017 so that it works in accordance with its objectives, principles and plans for a period of 10 ten years (from 2017 to 2027) and consists of four areas and general objectives as follows: First: the legal field (general purpose): Eliminate all types of legal discrimination against women and provide legal protection for women.

Second: the field of prevention (general purpose): Raising community awareness of the causes and effects of violence against women on the family and society. Third: The field of protection (general purpose): To support and advocate victims of violence and to protect women from all forms of violence. Fourth: the field of care (general objective): To improve services provided to women survivors of violence.

Laws and Legislations to Consolidate Women Rights

- Law No. 7 (2001) (excluding the wife from the provisions of paragraph (1) of Art 41 of the Iraqi Penal Code amended (111) for the year 1969).
- Law No. 8 (2001) (unjust divorce): If a man divorced his wife and it proved to the court that this divorce is unfair and the wife had been hurt, then the court shall rule on the husband a provision appropriate to his material conditions and the degree of injustice and assess all the damages, all the expenses should be covered by the husband for a minimum of two years and not exceeding three years.
- Law No. 14 (2002): The commission of the crime against women under the pretext of honorary motives is not considered a mitigated legal excuse for the purposes of applying the provisions of Articles (128,130,131) of the Iraqi Penal Code No. (111) of (1969) as amended. Law No. 23 (2003) (the salaries and allowances are given in full, for women taking maternity leave).

- Law No. 7 (2009): Law of the Institute of Justice in the Kurdistan Region - Iraq: The issuance of this decision allows women to be a judge of justice, and accordingly there are a huge number of women holding the position of governor of justice. The Parliament issued a law (No. 2 of 2009) on the elections of the Parliament of the Region, where the percentage of women representation was set at least (30%) of the number of seats in the Parliament.
- Law No. 4 of (2009) on the elections of the provincial councils in the region was established. Determining the percentage of women representation by no less than (30%) of the number of members of the council of each province of the region.
- Law No. 23 (2003): (payment of the full salaries and allowances, for women enjoying maternity leave during the period of their vacation).
- Law No. 14 (2002): The commitment of crimes against women under the pretext of honorary motives is not considered a mitigated legal excuse.
- Law No. 3 (2015): Law amending the application of the Iraqi Penal Code No. (111) for the year 1969 amended in the region.
- Law No. 7 (2001): (exempt the wife from the provisions of paragraph (1) of Article (41) of the Iraqi Penal Code amended (111) for the year 1969).
- Law No. 8 (2001) (unjust divorce): If the man divorced his wife and it was proved to the court that this divorce is unjust and has caused damage to the wife, the court shall rule on the husband a provision appropriate to his financial conditions and the degree of injustice along with the damage that has been caused.
- Law on the prevention of misuse of telecommunications equipment No. 6 (2008) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Personal Status Law No. 188 (2011) as amended.
- Personal Status Law No. 15 (2008): Law implementing the amendment of the Iraqi Personal Status Law, which includes (25) articles in the interest of women.

Judicial Authority

Within the framework of increasing the role of women in the judicial authority and in accordance with the principle of equality, an increase was made in the percentage of

women in the judicial and the public prosecution service. As a result, the number of women judges in the region is increasing and there is now a huge number of female judges and prosecutors working in the courts of the region as follows:

- 30 Female judges out of 233 judges.
- 56 Female judges working in the Public Prosecution Sector out of 202 judges.
- Out of 41 graduates of the Judicial Institute in 2014, 13 of the graduates were females.
- 12 Female judges and prosecutors graduated in 2015 out of 35 graduates.
- In 2018, 28 women were admitted to the Judicial Institute out of 60 admitted students.
- 31 Female judges have been appointed in the courts of appeal in addition to appointing 94 judicial investigators in the region.
- 289 assistant judicial investigators.

Department Name	Females
Divan of the Ministry	61
Erbil Governorate / General Administration	222
Erbil Governorate / Local Administration	140
Duhok Governorate / General Administration	171
Dohuk Governorate / Local Administration	97
Duhok Interior Affairs	6
Sulaymaniyah Governorate / General Administration	424

Yezidi Women

According to the statistics of the rescue office of the Yazidi abductees, and their reliable sources, up to 1/8/2019 was as follows: The number of Yazidis in Iraq was about 550,000. The number of kidnapped Yezidis 6,417 of them: 3,548 females. The numbers of survivors of ISIS terrorists are as follows: 3,509 of whom 1,192 were women, female children: (1033). These women have been subjected to many forms and dirty behaviors far from human customs and traditions, such as buying and selling, torture, physical and psychological abuse, change of religion, and sexual assault.

Hundred survivors were sent to Germany to treat them, especially psychologically deteriorated according to an agreement between the regional government and the German government. The Kurdistan Regional Council of Ministers issued Resolution No. 5170 on 21/8/2014, which established a high committee to define what the Yezidis were subjected to by ISIS terrorist group as a crime of genocide. The Office of the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region on 25/11/2014 formed a special committee to collect information and follow up the file of the Kidnapped girls and allocate a budget for their release.

A Centre for the Investigation of Crimes (Genocide), consisting of a group of legal, psychological and social specialists, was established to provide services to Yezidi women who survived ISIS. In this field, more than 2,000 women have been assisted; more than 1,000 of them are over 18 years of age. By transferring them to hospitals, treating them and comforting them psychologically by specialists, for this purpose the Directorate opened special courses and workshops to help them and work on how to integrate them into society.

Again, towards the end of 2020, 2036 cases of sexual assault against Yezidi women and girls have been recorded in Duhok. The psychological, social and legal treatment of more than 1,278 people in the consultative center in Duhok through the psychological and social treatment unit by the trained staff, By the Commission on Justice and International Matters (CIJA), they have signed a contract with the KRG to assist in the investigation, collection and documentation of crime evidence. For this purpose, the ISIS Crime Investigation Unit (DCIU) was established; they have done a lot of remarkable work, especially preparing hundreds of legal files for cases of enslaving girls, women, Yazidi Kurdish children and other components.

Children Rights

Law of Combating Family Violence No 8 (2011) sets outstanding limits for the violence incurred on children by their families and relatives. Accordingly, the perpetrators are severely punished on the basis of Art 398 and 393 from the Iraqi Penal Code.

Marriage for the under-age citizens, refugees, and IDPs is prohibited in the KR-I. Articles 1 and 2 from the Domestic Violence Law No. 8 (2011) set the legal punishments for this practice. Furthermore, KRG assigned police officers and the offices of combating domestic violence in the camps to deter parents from forcing their children into marriages. Other teams from the MOI and civil society organizations are constantly conducting awareness campaigns in the camps concerning under-age marriages and sexual violence.

There are exceptions, however, to arrange the necessary legal documents for people of 16 years old under special circumstances. These exceptions are enshrined in the amended Law No. 188 of (1959), which stipulates that “Iraqis are free in their commitment to their personal status according to their religions, sects, beliefs or choices, and this shall be regulated by law.” And it is further explained in Article 5 of the Law No. 15 (2008) of the Kurdistan Parliament: “if a 16-year old person asks to be married, the judge can authorize the marriage if the eligibility of the person in question has been established and approval received from the guardian. If the guardian abstains from responding, the judge calls upon them to state their agreement during a determined period. If the guardian does not object or if s/he submits an objection that is unworthy of consideration, the judge shall allow the marriage.”

Moreover, Article 2 of the law on Domestic Violence No. 8 (2011) defines child marriage as an act of domestic violence. Art 6 of the law imposes a penalty on whoever marries an underage or forces one into marriage: an imprisonment for a period of between 2 to 5 years if s/he is a first degree relative, but if the offender is not of those, the imprisonment period will stretch from three to ten years.

The MOI, through the JCC, continues to repel the humanitarian crisis in the Kurdistan Region by enforcing the relevant laws and conducting awareness campaigns in this regard. These actions primarily target women issues, especially: combating physical and sexual violence through establishing a national agenda to further enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1325, opening offices to combat domestic violence in all the refugee and IDP camps in the Region, creating 14 teams to assist the victims of sexual violence, establishing a committee to collect the evidences of ISIL crimes, striving to liberate the women abducted by ISIL and supporting the international organizations and agencies that are collaborative in this respect.

There are 16 specialized centers to raise awareness about marriage and conduct all necessary tests before marriage to ensure the health of new couples such as: tests for hepatitis, thalassemia, tuberculosis, anemia and AIDS where 233 cases of thalassemia were discovered in 2017 while in 2018, 342 cases were discovered.

Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

Due to the huge influx of refugees and IDPs, lack of social awareness, economic crisis, and rising unemployment rates, child labor has been widely spread across the KR. According to the KRG Independent Commission of Human Rights, 921 people was arrested in 2019 for begging, and 445 of them were below 18. The investigations inferred

that some interconnected bands were behind this awful act. The security forces began collecting evidence to arrest the perpetrators. Assuredly, the under-age persons are dealt with as victims and they do not bear criminal liability.

Concerning child labor, it is prohibited for children below 15 of age to work. And those who are above 15 and below 18 are legally protected to be engaged only in jobs that require constrained exertion.

The Law of Combating Family Violence No. 2 (2008) encompasses verbal and physical damages inflicted on women and children, and stipulates the punishments accordingly.

The Child Protection Law is already in the final phases of drafting. The draft has been prepared by legal and social experts from both inter and intra governmental counterparts. It has been submitted to UNICEF’s regional headquarter in Amman for revision and evaluations. The law is composed of 6 sections, 8 paragraphs, and 45 articles. It is inclusive enough to address the children's issues in their entirety.

Shelters for Homeless Children and Teenagers

City/Town	Males	Females
Erbil	126	108
Duhok	66	87
Sulaimani	30	14

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs issued Regulation No 1 (2017) that validates tutelage for guardians who want to take custody of an abandoned child or whose parents are deceased. The child or toddler age limit is 4, and the guardians are legally subjected to raise the child decently. Thirty-five parents have hitherto been granted guardianship. The accommodation of the children and providing them with guardianship has been a great initiative to reduce begging, abuse, and child labor.

Persons with Disabilities

The KRG has taken care of the handicapped and disabled people and guaranteed their rights through the adoption of the law number 22 (2011) – (the rights and privileges of persons with disabilities and special needs) via its constant implementation, despite the difficult administrative and security conditions experienced by the region issued a

regional government Kurdistan has many instructions that include the fields (health, social, education, work, professional, cultural and sports).

Article 10, paragraph 3, of the abovementioned Law states that at least 5% of persons with disabilities and special needs must be appointed in public sector institutions, trained and rehabilitated in the professional and functional fields. The number of disabled employees after the review of the medical committee reached (12,068) employees in government departments and institutions.

The number of victims of mines and explosives who lost organs and limbs of their body in the Kurdistan region led to a formation of population of 10,815 persons with various disabilities, including 90 who work in the field of demining, lost organs, and limbs and suffered from other physical, psychological and socio-economic damages, due to mines and UXOs. This number is of course included within a larger population number of people living with disabilities. A draft law has been prepared to guarantee the rights of the workers in the minefields, by granting those rights and privileges as a result of their work in the field of demining and explosives, including (salaries, health insurance, study, retirement). The KRG also provided a monthly grant to mine victims within the government budget.

The special study was provided for students with disabilities and special needs according to the curriculum of the institutes for the care of the disabled Law No. 5 (1991), and was amended in (2002). The Regional Government also provided study and physical and psychological preparation for children with special needs (blind, deaf and mute, physically and mentally handicapped) at the autism center, teachers and special programs have been established in the above mentioned fields.

The above-mentioned law has been largely altered in 2020 by issuing new regulations, especially with regard to the wages the handicapped persons receive based on their physical or mental incapacities. The new regulations-which are in force at present - invalidates the previous medical evaluations and stipulate opening new centers to conduct more compelling ones. Currently, there are 89,547 handicapped persons registered in the KRG payrolls: 100,000 IQD to government employees and 150,000 IQD is given to those who are not governmental employees. According to the newly amended law, each person will receive salaries based on the proportion of his or her disabilities.

Conclusion

Since its establishment, KRG has embarked on a mission to consolidate a well-functioning democratic system, and to flourish with standardized calibers of human rights and good governance. KRG has sought to turn inward in building a firm economic and public infrastructure accompanied with resourceful domestic human capacity, which is established and enhanced through inclusive campaigns to eradicate illiteracy and furnish a healthy education system.

Meanwhile, Kurdistan Region has opened its markets to private and foreign investments to further improve the sectors of health, education, energy, and agriculture, in addition to

promoting economic accountability and transparency. Also, the cohesive patterns of communal cohabitation and coexistence, gender justice, accommodative policies towards IDPs and refugees, institutional integrity, rule of law, among others, indicate that KRG has underpinned a strong foundation for a consolidated democracy, and that it is determined to resume the process of social development in line with human rights principles.

The international counterparts have been contributive in making these progresses. The evaluations put forward in the US Department of State's report on human rights practices commends KRG efforts in embracing effective approaches to enhance and sustain human rights' status. Nevertheless, repetitions and redundancy of the allegations are remarkably observed, similar to the previous years. The State Department recalibrated some of the findings, however, to stress more on individual freedoms, gender equality, and good governance, while downplaying the parts pertinent to ISIL – considering the demise of the caliphate and its fragmentations to weak and scattered small cells in the country.

The findings primarily revolve around the integrity of individuals, including pretrial detentions, forced disappearance, arbitrary arrests, and torture; protection of civil liberties, such as internet freedom, refugees and IDPs, and freedom of speech; corruption, transparency, and good governance; women and children' rights; workers' rights; and religious and social reconciliation.

KRG Office of the Coordinator for International Advocacy (OCIA) carefully followed-up with the relevant institutions, and invested detailed clarifications for the points raised in the report.

KRG embraces observations from its international counterparts, chief among them the United States. However, as KRG has exhibited the embodiment of the crucial democratic values and has exemplified the consolidation of pillar of good governance, there are indisputably few verified allegations of human rights abuses in the report - which are alien to the legislations and regulations in place.

Further investigation the allegations posed by the US Department of State's report will be carried out, and KRG acknowledges their continuous efforts in addressing the human rights concerns in the Kurdistan Region. KRG asks for similar sincere recommendations from its international counterparts to enhance the democratic principles by which it governs. Meanwhile, most of the allegations in the report have been tackled in their previous reports – and other international counterparts - and the necessary clarifications have been demonstrated by KRG accordingly. Still, the clarifications put forward here thoroughly elucidate the concerns, underline the challenges, and stress on concrete solutions.

