

July 29, 2021

Statement by the KRG Office of the Coordinator for International Advocacy (OCIA)

Kurdistan Region is a Decent Example for the Embodiment of the Rule of Law and Democratic Values

On June 28, 2021 , the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) expressed concern over the trial of Mr. Qaraman Shukri.

Mr. Qaraman Shukri arraigned in a public hearing with the presence of a lawyer appointed by the court. Mr. Shukri has been sentenced to seven years imprisonment under Article 1 of Law No 21 (2003). The charges have nothing to do with Mr. Shukri's journalistic work.

Mr. Qaraman Shukri has been arrested by a court warrant and he was investigated in accordance with the law. He has been arrested and convicted for being a member of an illegal armed organization and carrying out intelligence tasks for it.

Mr. Shukri is currently serving his sentence in Zarka prison in Duhok. He has been guaranteed full rights as a prisoner, including family calls and encounters.

The KRG considers free media to be an important pillar of governance and a cornerstone of democracy. We are proud that Kurdistan has a free media, and is an exemplar of upholding the values of freedom of expression in the region.

We reaffirm that the courts are independent and the judicial authority is enshrined in the constitution and, as each of the executive and legislative authorities, has its own independence. At the same time, the executive authorities will not interfere in the work of the courts.

The KRG is fully committed to the rule of law and to a fair and impartial legal process, and freedom of expression is a priority to its governance practices. The government is working with counterparts to ensure that the Kurdistan Region adheres to international human rights standards and the agreements ratified by Iraq.

The regional government also has an arrangement with the Red Cross Committee, and, according to the agreement, the party has the right to visit all prisons and correctional facilities in the region without permission. Under the auspices of another parallel arrangement, UNAMI has so far made 14 visits to detention facilities and met with 60 prisoners.

At the same time, diplomatic representations have been invited to promote legal and judicial reforms in the region. The government is working with its international counterparts to ensure that Kurdistan is fully committed to international human rights standards, especially in the field of media freedom.