

November 10, 2021

Countries Need to Abide by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with Regards to the Rights of Migrants and the Protection of their Lives

A large number of migrants are stuck between the borders of Poland and Belarus. This issue has recently been raised by some local and international organizations and the media. Some of them have alleged that the living conditions of the region's citizens are the reason for their migration, thus infusing politicized rhetoric into the humanitarian crisis.

The immigrants, some of whom are citizens of the Kurdistan Region, gathered on the Belarusian-Polish border and tried to enter Polish soil.

In this respect, Dr. Dindar Zebari, KRG Coordinator for International Advocacy stated that "the issue of migrants is not a new, but in the last few years it has seen a new direction and some countries are using it as a political pressure card against each other".

As far as migration is concerned, relations between the EU and some countries in the region have been strained for some time.

Regarding the presence of a number of citizens of the Kurdistan Region among the migrants, Dindar Zebari said that "the KRG is against smuggling of citizens into other countries; this process runs and perpetuates outside the Kurdistan Region. Immigrants apply for tourist visas through neighboring countries to enter Europe. Unfortunately, the process is being programmed. We can see thousands of people being mobilized to reach the borders of the European Union, some of whom are residents of the Kurdistan Region and Iraq, but the spike is flowing from other countries as well. Recently, the Polish media reported that in the past few days, two large caravans of migrants, mainly from outside of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, have crossed the border into the country".

Concerning the situation of migrants on the border between Belarus and Poland, the KRG Coordinator said: "According to our follow-up in the last few days, between 3000 and 4000 immigrants of all different nationalities have tried to cross the border into Poland".

"The KRG has reiterated that it is against any move that could lead to the forced repatriation of migrants, and that according to international agreements and treaties, both Poland and Belarus must abide by the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international law in dealing with the immigrants. They live in a difficult humanitarian situation and they need help".

The International Advocacy Coordinator noted that "some parties and organizations were trying to prove that the regional government was responsible for the migration to the Polish-Belarusian border, adding that the KRG has been facing a difficult economic situation due to the influxes of IDPs and refugees during the war against ISIL. There are

about 689,903 internally displaced people, most of whom are residents of the disputed territories and have not been able to return to their places due to insecurity and lack of basic services. This situation has created a kind of frustration in the minds of the citizens in these areas, so a large part of the population in these territories has grown a tendency to flee the country".

Zebari also stated that hundreds of villages in the border areas of the region have been deserted due to military clashes between outlawed militant group PKK and neighboring country. The residents of these villages have left their places, despite the fact that these land have been allocated to agriculture and farming, which are the primary source for their living. This also added to the frustration of the citizens.

D. Dindar Zebari also said that "those who are migrating there are telling false stories about living conditions in the Kurdistan Region and are being exploited by political businessmen to tarnish the region's reputation. Also, they are encouraged by smugglers for material gain".

At the end of his remarks, Zebari said that "migration is not a phenomenon peculiar to Kurdistan Region; it is taking place globally. The rights of citizens in Kurdistan are protected by law and that the regional government has recently approved a regional plan for human rights and fully supports its implementation. The plan is comprehensive, and it encompasses efforts from the government, civil society organizations, activists, and UN agencies and foreign country representatives. KRG has always been committed to promote the principles of rule of law, good governance, economic prosperity, and creation of job opportunities for youth".