

KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Council of Ministers

Office of the Coordinator for
International Advocacy



حکومه‌تی هه‌ریمی کوردستان - عێراق

هه‌نجومه‌نی وه‌زیران

هه‌وێسه‌نگه‌ی رێکخه‌ری
پاسپارده‌ نیوده‌وله‌تیه‌کان

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

March 30, 2022

Statement in Response to Amnesty International's Annual Report

On March 29, 2022, Amnesty International released its annual report highlighting the situation of human rights for most of the countries in 2021 according to their own assessments. The report dedicated a portion to Iraq and the Kurdistan Region .

It is important that all parties' understanding of the situation in Kurdistan is based on robust engagement and on rigorous analysis and assessment of the information they receive.

In 2020, the COVID- 19 pandemic presented some extraordinary challenges to the KRG. In response the government has taken steps which were considered essential for the protection of public health. However, no journalist or media outlet in 2021 were restricted from journalistic activity due to Covid-19.

Journalists have unfettered freedom to broadcast and cover as long as their activities do not stumble to libel and defamation, or lead to violation of law in certain ways. Contrary to Amnesty's findings, journalists and activists are not restricted from tackling political topics.

Thirty-one allegations of violations were recorded by the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate in the first half of 2021. However, more than ten of the allegations in the first half of 2021 are pertinent to outside the territories that fall under the jurisdiction of KRG. For example, on June 24, according to the Syndicate, the office of Kurdistan 24 was closed by the security personnel in North-Eastern Syria.

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Furthermore, on January 10, 2021 a team of NRT in Kirkuk were detained for a few hours on the basis of their coverage of the lack of adequate public services in the city. The NRT team faced a similar detention by unknown militants in Mosul during the Pope's visit in early March. Rudaw, Speda, Payam, and some other media outlets faced persecutions or suffered from coverage restrictions in the disputed areas, according to the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate.

The Metro Centre, which monitors and campaigns for journalists' rights in Iraq recently reported that allegations of violations against journalists in Kurdistan in 2021 had fallen by more than half in the first five months of 2021 when compared to 2020.

As far as KRG and the individuals convicted for posing danger to national security are concerned, the cases alluded to in Amnesty's report are not related to journalism and activism. The individuals, in face of the overwhelming evidence against them, confessed during investigation phase and in the court hearings. The legal specifications of the cases are illustrated in KRG's response to the latest OHCHR/UNAMI report.

The KRG continues to work with UNAMI and the OHCHR on media freedom, both in terms of wider policy and legislative changes as well as specific situations. KRG has agreement with ICRC and OHCHR/UNAMI, through which the latter parties have access to the detention and correctional facilities. In this respect, OHCHR/UNAMI conducted fourteen visits and interviewed 60 prisoners in the first five months of 2021.