

April 27, 2022

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

The KRG Coordinator for International Advocacy Delivered a Speech at the Human Rights Council in Geneva

It is an honor for me to address the Human Rights Council once again. To commence, I want to stress Kurdistan Regional Government's unwavering commitment to abide by the principles of human rights. Kurdistan Region witnessed dismal political, security, and economic challenges in the recent years, including the fight against ISIS, which, despite its affirmative defeat on the ground, poses formidable threats through conducting hit-and-run attacks in the disputed areas.

However, notwithstanding the hardships and the overwhelming challenges, KRG has taken serious steps to fulfill its obligations to protect human rights. In addition to issuing laws, instructions and regulations, the KRG Presidency of the Council of Ministers has approved the Kurdistan Regional Plan for Human Rights (2021-2025) last year, which was prepared in consultation with a number of United Nations agencies, local and international civil society organizations, and diplomatic offices.

The plan is a road map for consolidating human rights principles for the coming years and implementing the commitments mainstreamed to the KRG primarily through the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the United Nations Human Rights Council.

To combat torture, the Kurdistan Regional Government takes effective judicial and administrative measures, where the Public Prosecutor Office is tasked with investigating all forms of torture in detention and correctional facilities to ensure that detainees and those convicted are not subjected to ill-treatment. Legal measures are taken against the security personnel who are involved in perpetrating torture or facilitating its occurrence. In this respect, cases that allegedly involve torture have been tackled and the legal proceedings have already taken course.

The legal proceedings include the approval of an equitable compensation for persons who remained in pre-trial detention for a longer-than-usual period. Furthermore, legal measures were taken against number of law enforcement officers for employing violence in dealing with inmates; the measures ranged from warnings, deprivation of allowances for consecutive months, and translocation of their duties to other administrative units.

Additionally, the Detention and Prison Regulations No. 1 of 2008 regulations remain in force, in which a set of rights were consolidated for inmates, the most important of which are education, visits, health care and the right to home leave. Procedures have been

streamlined and the strict security arrangements have been eased in the reformatory facilities for observers from international and local organizations, the Independent Commission for Human Rights, and the specialized committees in the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region to visit correctional facilities and detention centers to preserve the rights of the inmates and investigate allegations of torture. Between January and May 2021, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) conducted more than 14 visits, during which they met with 60 detainees.

Mr. Chairman

All measures related to arresting the accused persons or suspects carried out in accordance with the provisions of law. Prior to conviction, the detainees are entitled to full and inalienable rights. The reasons underlying a person's arrest are elucidated in line with the pressed charges against him; moreover, his family will be promptly informed of the place of his arrest. Aside from these basic rights, the court will appoint a lawyer to accompany the suspect throughout the investigation and trial phases, if the latter could not afford hiring one. In this regard, the costs of appointing lawyers to the regional government amounted to more than IQD 1,700,000,000 (one billion and seven hundred million Iraqi dinars). If the court upholds the innocence of the suspect, he will be compensated according to Law No.15 (2010), which stipulates compensating detainees and convicted persons in the region. The total number of convicts in the correctional facility, according to the statistics of the Department of Social Reform on March 2022 reached 4,922 among whom, there are 465 women and juveniles. In terms of gender, the latter number is divided into 312 males and 153 females. In order to address the problem of prison overcrowding, the regional government is working on constructing buildings with the observance of the required architectural and engineering design standards, and it has a plan to construct a building with a capacity of accommodating 5000 inmates. Efforts are also underway to construct a special building for juveniles and women's correctional facilities, and 26% of the project has been implemented. In 2021 and the first three months of 2022, 167 cases of psychiatric disorders have been diagnosed, 11 cases have been cured, and the rest are still receiving treatment. On April 19, 2022, the Prime Minister HE Masrour Barzani ordered the opening of three psychiatric hospitals for women in the governorates of Erbil, Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah.

Mr. Chairman

A large number of IDPs and refugees are still living in the Kurdistan Region. Their number is estimated at 926,018: 664,237 are internally displaced persons, 241,937 and 8,479 are Syrian and Turkish refugees respectively. For the purpose of recognizing the crimes of ISIS terrorists, the regional government has documented the dossiers of thousands of abductees. So far 5,170 case files are registered, of which more than 2,324 are concluded in the courts, 2,000 are still under investigation and 2,916 are registered as

missing. Social and psychological support was provided to more than 2,234 victims. To document ISIS crimes, KRG has cooperated with United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh (UNITAD) within the framework of the Iraqi National Coordination Committee (NCC), and succeeded in digitally archiving more than 73,912 pages for these crimes. I have to emphasize that the regional government made unrelenting efforts to liberate the kidnappees, so it set up a committee to collect information and conduct follow up on the kidnappees dossier and earmarked a budget for this purpose. Towards 4 February 22, 2022, 3,552 people have been rescued: of whom 1,207 are women, 339 are men, and 2,719 people are still missing. With regard to freedom of expression and the press, the judicial authorities are following up on allegations of torture against journalists, of which number of lawsuits have been filed, and 31 individuals were fined for using violence against journalists, and several cases were investigated for using violence against them. For providing refuge for abused women, KRG established 4 shelters, which received about 2000 cases. In addition to the citizens of the Kurdistan Region, the shelters receive displaced women and refugees, as well as foreign women residing in the region. In 2021, the number of female inmates in the shelters was 105, of whom 92 were citizens, 13 were foreigners, and, on the top of that, about 60 IDPs and refugees.

Mr. Chairman The regional government has taken many steps in the field of combating human trafficking, including conducting awareness and educational campaigns about the dangers of human trafficking in coordination with civil and religious organizations and research centers. The concerned authorities in the government investigated 340 recruitment agencies, referred 39 companies to the court, conducted investigation with 2,026 foreign nationals, and introduced 7 awareness sessions for employees to deal with human trafficking cases, and opened a special shelter for victims of human trafficking.

Mr. Chairman, in the end, I would like to point out that capital punishment has been suspended in the Kurdistan region since 2008, except in the rare cases that affect the public opinion. Despite the issuance of death sentences against 300 defendants, their sentences have not been implemented. In 2021 only, 36 criminals were sentenced to death in Kurdistan Region according to Article 406 of the Iraqi Penal Code. The conviction of 6 persons was reduced from the death penalty to life imprisonment after appeal.

Thank you