

Statement by the KRG Office of Coordinator for International Advocacy on the UK Government Report about Human Rights and Democracy

On 13 July, 2023 the UK Government published its annual Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office report about Human Rights and Democracy globally including Federal Iraq and KRI. The Office of the Coordinator for international advocacy (OCIA) through its governmental network has analyzed specific comments addressed to the KRG authorities, these remarks necessitate a thorough examination and thoughtful deliberation. The 2022 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Report about Human Rights and Democracy delves into a wide range of subjects, including women's rights, the rights of ethnic minorities, the freedom of journalists, and freedom of movement.

The authorities of the KRG ensured that no arrests were made without a proper warrant, demonstrating their commitment to due process. Furthermore, the KRG undertook decisive measures to safeguard the right to peaceful protest while also exhibiting a deep respect for the freedom of journalism to carry out their work free from any violation.

To enable the citizens of the Kurdistan Region to exercise their right to obtain information with public and private institutions and to support transparency and participation to consolidate the democratic process, the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region issued the Access to Information Law No 11 (2013) and recently further dialogue is undertaken to adhere to the current realities as well as the inclusion of international standards in parallel to treaties and convention globally. However, journalists and media outlets are invariably entitled to request and access data that is available to public scrutiny.

The report observes the condition of a fair trial and procedural safeguards in the KRI and Iraq. In order to safeguard and embrace impartiality, the KRG maintains its position by affirming the existence of a judicial system that is free and independent. In the Kurdistan Region, the judicial branch oversees security services that work to uncover crimes and bring them to justice. There is also an independent, impartial PPO, 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.

With regard to women's rights, the report highlights the presence of violations against women and instances of honor killings in KRI. KRG deals with honor-killing as a crime that is not mitigatable by any excuse. The Parliament of Kurdistan issued Law No 3 (2015) suspending the provisions of Art 40 of the Iraqi Penal Code, which is to reduce the penalty for whoever kills his wife or one of his female relatives or assaults them if they are surprised by adultery or bedding. Contrary to the federal legislations - which are lenient on the men who commit murder under the pretext of cleaning their honor - the laws in place

in the Kurdistan Region identify honor-killings as deliberate murder and, hence, heavy punitive measures i.e., life sentence is imposed on the perpetrators.

KRG embraces observations from its international counterparts and exhibited the embodiment of the crucial democratic values and has exemplified the consolidation pillar of good governance. The KRG acknowledges the unwavering and ongoing support provided by the UK in regard to the Regional Action Plan for Human Rights (2021-2025) and specifically the recent efforts taken to raise competence and capacity building of judges and prosecutors. KRG counterparts look forward to further constructive, productive and bilateral engagement taking into consideration the challenges, stability and security of its citizens.