

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

April 21, 2021

**Response to Reporter Without Borders (RSF)**

On April 20, 2021, Reporters Without Border (RSF) compiled and released the World Press Freedom Index, in which Iraq ranked 163. Moreover, as far as Kurdistan Region is concerned, the RSF posed some allegations in a short report regarding the status of press freedom.

The RSF ranking is predominantly based on an inclusive assessment of the status of press freedom in the whole country, rather than a discrete analysis based on regions. Additionally, the short report that relates to the ranking poses allegations against KRG that are vague and not supported by details.

Arbitrary arrests, forced disappearance, torture, and obtaining illicit confessions from detainees are vicious practices that are alien to the democratic values by which KRG governs. And the allegations that claim the contrary are apparently based on off-beam findings.

In parallel to tens of media outlets, newspapers, radio stations, and social media pages, there are over 8,000 persons registered in the Syndicate of Journalists, in addition to hundreds of bloggers and social media activists that are overwhelmingly engaged in assessing the good governance practices without censors or constraints.

Furthermore, proper due process of law is upheld regardless of the circumstances.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is fully committed to the rule of law, to a fair and impartial legal process, and to the freedom of the press. Practicing journalism in the Kurdistan Region is guaranteed and organized by law. In instances of maligning, spreading violence, vandalism, libel, however, Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 will be executed. An instance that involves libel often will be subjected to the Law of Misuse of Telecommunication Devices.

These exceptions should not be perceived as erratic, because journalists will face these laws when they violate law while they are not in their journalistic career capacity, or if the violations involve legal procedures prescribed by other laws. Out of these instances, Kurdistan Parliament-enacted Press Law No. 35 (2007) will be enforced.