

August 20, 2020

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

The Public Disturbance in Zakho Resulted in Numerous Casualties

A riot took place in Zaxo yesterday, August 19, 2020, that allegedly aimed to convey the concerns of local truck drivers. The public disturbance took place late at night and took profound turns towards the destruction of public and private properties, and physical abuses of civilians and security forces.

KRG is fully committed to preserve and promote freedom of speech within civic demonstrations and vigils aimed to enhance social welfare and public good. But yesterday's protest soon transformed to a vicious riot.

The protest was supposedly managed and led by truck drivers who felt that the opening of Ibrahim Khalil crossing point with Turkey, will allow the drivers from Turkey to deliver passengers to stations inside the Kurdistan Region, a step that would expectedly damage their labor. However, unknown perpetrators soon chanted slogans of PKK and started to fire gunshots towards the security forces, turning the protest into an act of public disturbance that involved vandalism and physical abuses of security forces and civilians.

We confirm that 61 persons from security forces and 4 civilians have been injured. 18 people are now arrested who had firearms in their possession amid the riot. The gun fires of the latter resulted in the injury of a child. The investigations are ongoing to find the perpetrator.

Moreover, 26 police and civilian cars have been damaged, in addition to other public and private properties. It is noteworthy that while the gathering was reportedly aimed to convey the rights of the drivers, only 4 drivers have been detected during the investigations. Nonetheless, the situation in Zakho is currently calm and under control.

KRG ensures the public opinion and the international community that the arrested persons will be dealt with in accordance with law. KRG proudly flourished with the preservation and promotion of values indispensable for a decent civil life. And regarding the demand of the drivers, Ibrahim Khalil is an international crossing point that is subjected to international and national protocols.

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