



Euro-Med Human  
Rights Monitor  
الأورومتوسطي لحقوق الإنسان

# Iraq..

## Violations Without Deterrent



The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor

October 2020

# Contents

Introduction	4
Statistics on the Iraqi protests (October -2019June 2020)	9
Background on Iraq's crises that led to the revolution	10
Statistics and numbers on the Iraq crises for 2019	10
The most prominent violations against the popular protests	11
Testimonies of protesters who were subjected to violations	12
Statistics of violations during the protests (October -2019 1 June 2020 ,1)	12
Violations of freedom of opinion and expression	13
Torture and ill-treatment	14
Violations against Journalists	15
Kidnapping and enforced disappearances	19
List of names of abductees during from the demonstrations	19
Legal background	19
Recommendations	19



# Introduction



«When a person is subjected to all these violations while young, death or threats of death become meaningless»

**Ali Al-Kazemi (nickname)** – an activist

The Iraqi protests, or what is known as the October Revolution, erupted on October 2019 ,1, as a result of the deteriorating economic conditions, the high rates of unemployment and poverty, and the spread of corruption at state institutions. The protests started from Baghdad and spread to the rest of Iraq provinces, calling for the resignation of Adel Abdul Mahdi's government, the formation of an interim government, and holding early elections.

The Iraqi security forces dealt with the demonstrations with excessive violence, and used many deadly and internationally banned weapons, such as live and rubber bullets, against the demonstrators, and deployed snipers in all buildings and areas surrounding the protests, and used sound bombs, water cannons and tear gas canisters to suppress the demonstrations at their start.

Police violence caused the death and injury of thousands of demonstrators. As of now, more than 730 demonstrators were killed and about 26,000 were injured, while around 3,000 were left with physical disabilities. Assassinations and physical liquidation of activists and journalists have spread too. At least 70 activists were killed in assassinations carried out by unknown gunmen.

The number of arrested and detained demonstrators since the beginning of the popular protests until June of this year reached about 87 ,2,827 of whom remain under investigation, and one was convicted.

Journalists, media professionals and civil activists have been subjected to a vicious attack by the security forces, as they work continuously to document the protests and the accompanying violations. According to a report issued by the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, 56 assassinations took place of which 28 failed against journalists, media professionals, and civilian activists, half of them resulted in injuries. According to the same report, about 41 journalists were injured during the protests, seven in Baghdad, 12 in Diwaniyah, four in Basra, 15 in Muthanna, and three in Karbala.



The report indicates that the number of missing and kidnapped demonstrators reached about 22 ,75 of whom were released, while 53 others disappeared and their fate is still unknown.

At another level, the Iraqi authorities shut down access to the internet during the protests in Baghdad and other cities while the former Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Hadi justified the decision as the internet was used “to spread hatred, violence, and terrorism.” The United Nations condemned the decision and said it violates International Human Rights Law, considering access to the internet a human right.

Euro-Med Monitor received reports of secret prisons belonging to militias in various governorates of Iraq. It is believed that the kidnapped demonstrators are detained in them, which are mainly civilian residential complexes. The most important of which is the prison at Al-Muthanna Airport, as well as the secret prison located in the Dora area, in which there are more than 3,000 detainees, and many serious human rights violations are taking place in these prisons including torturing detainees, filming them in inappropriate positions, and forcibly extracting confessions from them.

In this report, Euro-Med Monitor reviews testimonies documented by protesters who have fallen victims of various forms of violations and details of these violations. It provides a legal framework for the practices committed by the Iraqi authorities against peaceful protesters, including protests in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Statistics on

# The Iraqi protests

October 2019 - June 2020



## The Protesters



## Journalists



## Medical Staff



## Weapons used





# Background on Iraq's crises that led to the revolution



«The Iraqi scene is dark to a sad point. Those who check the crises of Iraq closely find that they are at two levels: terrorism and corruption; terrorism that protects corruption and corruption that finances terrorism.»

**Muhammad al-Kindi** a human rights activist

For years, Iraq has been suffering from tragic human rights and economic conditions that led thousands of Iraqi protesters to take to the streets at the beginning of October 2019. They went to the streets to protest against



the situation in the country, mainly high prices, high unemployment and poverty rates, lack of basic services such as clean water and electricity, rampant corruption at state institutions, escalation of violations against civilians' rights including arrests, kidnappings, enforced disappearances, and increased restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression.

Looking at poverty rates in Iraq, one finds that it has reached about 23%, where about seven million Iraqis live under the threat of poverty. Such high figures are caused by several reasons, most importantly the successive wars that have exhausted the country and the spread corruption at state institutions. Several official reports and studies issued by international organizations said that about \$450 billion, which is about four times the budget of Iraq and more than double the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) disappeared since 2003, which led to an alarming exacerbation of poverty. As for unemployment, the governorates of Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Diyala, and Anbar are among the most affected in the country, due to wars and destruction that affected all vital sectors, including the population's livelihoods. This includes restaurants, shops, and farms. This exacerbated the unemployment rate and made it rise to about 40%, and it is expected that it will rise further in light of the security threats, the absence of a real governmental role to solve the situation, the weakness of investment, and the high rates of population displacement.

As for the power crisis, Iraq suffers an almost complete collapse in the power system. Hours of power cuts reached about 16 hours a day. The situation

gets worse when combined with the high temperatures in the summer in various Iraqi cities that reach about 50C degrees. This led citizens to rely on privately-run power generators. However, relying on these generators constitutes an additional burden on them, as the price of one ampere a month is about 15,000 Iraqi dinars (\$12), which made many citizens unable to secure these sums for the owners of generators who consequently cut power off.

As for water, which is the most complex problem in Iraq, the state suffers from a serious decline in water reserves and the flow of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Not only this, but the central and southern governorates of the country complain from the contamination of drinking water.

All these crises led to the outbreak of the Iraqi protests at the beginning of October 2019, but these protests revealed a catastrophic level of rights and freedoms; security attacks on peaceful protesters left more than 730 demonstrators dead, about 26,000 wounded, and nearly 70 assassinated so far.

At the health level, the health system in Iraq suffers a severe deterioration, exacerbated by the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), starting from February 2020. The weak funding of the health sector led to a deterioration in the health situation of those infected with this virus, due to the lack of the necessary capabilities to confront this pandemic. This led to a further outbreak of the virus, as more than 359,000 had contracted the virus, 9,100 of whom died as of October 1.

Statistics on

# The Iraqi crises

for 2019



Poverty rates reached



## %23

7 million Iraqis are below the poverty line

Unemployment rate reached



## %40



## \$450 billion

disappeared since 2003  
due to corruption



## \$135 billion

of Iraqi government debts



## 16 hours

of power cuts a day

## 1,000,000

 unemployed

More than

## 150,000

 acres of agricultural lands have been  
destroyed by floods

The decline in monetary  
reserves from \$81 billion  
dollars to

## 38

billion \$



The budget  
deficit doubled to

## 23

billion \$



Globally, Iraq ranks

## 162

out of 180 in the most corrupt country index



Iraq ranks

## Third

in the Arab world in high-polluted areas



# The most prominent violations against the popular protests

Since its outbreak, the popular protests have witnessed many violations against peaceful protesters, including assaults, targeting, kidnappings, killings, and torture, committed by the Iraqi security forces and some partisan militias deployed in all Iraqi provinces.



When looking at the most prominent events that occurred during these protests, one finds that the security forces and partisan militias' use of violence was the main feature of the approach used to deal with the demonstrations. At the beginning of the protests, specifically on October 4, 2019, a military vehicle targeted the protesters near Tayaran Square in central Baghdad. The demonstrators responded with setting it on fire. As a result,

the Commander of the First Brigade Numan al-Maliki ordered the soldiers under his command to directly fire live bullets at the demonstrators, and any soldier violates these instructions will be punished, his weapon taken, and imprisoned. As a result of these military orders, many unarmed civilians were killed and wounded.

On the same day, Reporters Without Borders (RWB) published a report saying that a number of reporters were injured in the Tahrir Square demonstrations in Baghdad on the first day of the protests. The second day witnessed the arrest of journalist Arshad al-Hakim, who works for the Al Rasheed Satellite Channel, while covering the demonstrations in the Tayeran Square. In the meantime, many Iraqi regions and governorates issued decisions restricting journalistic work. For instance, the Anbar Provincial Council issued a decision prohibiting any media activity, while the Diwaniyah area, south of Baghdad, called the Special Forces to prevent journalists from doing their work.

A video recording showed these forces attacking journalist Zaid Al-Fatlawi, who works for the Dijlah TV, where he was severely beaten, despite their prior knowledge of his identity.

On October 26, 2019, government forces in Dhi Qar governorate carried out a campaign of arrests and abductions against journalists and

«The security forces fired live ammunitions at the demonstrators, causing direct injuries in the head and neck»

activists who participated in the demonstrations, and a security force arrested journalist Hussein Al-Amel and his son from their home in the city of Nasiriyah, the governorate's center.

On the same day, the security forces in Anbar province arrested activist Samir Farag from his home in the city of Ramadi, because of his support for the demonstrations, and threatened other activists with the same fate if they joined the demonstrations or showed support for them.

On November 28, 2019, the Rapid Response, Riot Control, and army forces attacked the civilian demonstrators in the Zaytoun Bridge area, Al-Zaytoun neighborhood, and near Al-Haboubi Hospital in the city of Nasiriyah, in southern Iraq.

According to an eyewitness, the number of dead protestors on that day reached more than 32 and more than 200 others were wounded.

On December 6, 2019, elements believed to be affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Forces launched an attack against the demonstrators in Al-Sinak Park and Al-Wathba Square in the center of the capital, Baghdad. Militias entered with 4x4 vehicles that do not carry official plates, wearing civilian clothes and carrying light and medium weapons. They opened fire directly at the peaceful demonstrators, which resulted in the killing of 16 and the wounding of more than 80, as well as the kidnapping of journalists and activists in Baghdad and other governorates on the same day, including photographer Zaid Muhammad al-Khafaji, Ibrahim Jadou al-Shammari,



activist Fadela Jawad Jassim, and protester Haider Hadi al-Hasnawi.

On December 12, 2019, an armed member of the «Saraya al-Khorsani» militia committed a massacre against the protesters in Al-Wathba Square, where he fired directly at the protesters, killing five of them and wounding several others.

On January 25, 2020, government forces and the militias accompanying them attacked the protesters' tents in Baghdad, Dhi Qar, and Basra using excessive force. The security forces issued orders to disperse sit-ins in governorates witnessing protests, and opened fire on large crowds in the Al-Sinak area, Al-Kilani Square and Al-Tahrir Square, and the sit-in in Basra and Nasiriyah, leaving no room for the demonstrators to exit safely.

On February 5, 2020, an armed group believed to be affiliated with the Sadrist Movement stormed the Sadrain Square in Najaf, opened fire on peaceful demonstrators, and threw grenades and burned all the tents of the protesters in the Square with Molotov cocktails. This resulted in killing of ten demonstrators and wounding not less than 90 others with live bullets, knives, and batons. In addition, their vehicles followed the demonstrators and arrested a number of them.

On March 8, 2020, riot police targeted demonstrators near Tahrir Square in Baghdad with hunting rifles and tear gas which resulted in the killing of two demonstrators, paramedic Amer Mahmoud Al-Ithawi, and another 15-year-old child.

On July 26, 2020, law enforcement forces, while trying to end demonstrations near Tahrir Square in Baghdad, killed two demonstrators: Latif Salman and Mahdi Al-Tamimi, and dozens others were wounded. On August 19, 2020, unknown gunmen assassinated Dr. Reham Yaqoub and her colleague, by shooting her in the Al-Jenina area in Basra Governorate.

# Testimonies of protesters

## subjected to abuse



Euro-Med Monitor's field research team in Iraq met with a group of civil activists who participated in the demonstrations and were subjected to various types of violations at the hands of the Iraqi government security forces and armed militias.

In an interview with "The Iraqi"(nickname), an employee at the Iraqi Oil Ministry said, "On 1 October 2019, while I was in Tahrir Square in Baghdad with other protesters at exactly 6 p.m., I was nearly shot at by a live bullet, that did not hit me, a tear gas canister. As a result, I went to Sheikh Zayed Hospital in Baghdad due to severe suffocation from gas".



«In the same month, I was attacked for the second time in the Najaf area in Sadrain Square, where a group from the Muqtada al-Sadr's militia physically assaulted me, aimed hunting rifles at me, and threatened me with physical liquidation, which prompted me to leave my governorate.»

In another interview with Salem Ahmed (nickname), 25, a civil activist, he said: “When the demonstrations began in October 2019, I mobilized youth groups through social media, using Facebook groups, and gathered the largest possible number of young people to participate in these demonstrations in order to reclaim our stolen rights. I nearly mobilized 300 young men who were able to set up a sit-in tent in the demonstrations square and we began our demonstrations, but this exposed me to many violations. I was threatened with death by unknown people, and I was arrested while I was at the demonstrations. They forced me to sign papers admitting acts that I did not commit, including inciting to burn security centers and headquarters, and I was also chased by gunmen on a motorbike because of my peaceful activities at the protests”.

“I have been receiving calls telling me that I am on a list containing ten names prone to assassination, and repeatedly threatening me with kidnapping and killing my brothers. My house was targeted by RPGs by unknown people.

“One time, I was subjected to beating and stabbing with a knife and teargas by a Crime Prevention Unit. This caused me chronic sinusitis due to inhaling teargas and pepper bombs. This forced me to flee my house. I am

still being chased as of now. I have not returned home for nine months”. In another interview with Samir Ali (nickname), 26, a civil activist, he said, “At the beginning of the protests, I mobilized youth groups and urged them to go out to the demonstrations. I was responsible for a group on Facebook that has 150,000 members. I provided logistical and financial support for the demonstrators, but that exposed me to many violations. While I was at the demonstrations, a fight started between me and a person affiliated with the Sadrist Movement. Then, on my way back home, I noticed that there was a person following me on a motorcycle and wearing a white hood. He approached me and shot three bullets at me, but I miraculously escaped. “After this incident, I realized that I am under threat which prompted me to go to the police station. I filed a report about the incident, but I have not received any answer until now”.

## Statistics of violations during the protests (October 1, 2019- June 1, 2020)

Governorate	Wounded	Dead	Detainees
Baghdad	19,413	420	1,180
Dhi Qar	1,878	114	431
Basra	1,259	59	324
Najaf	587	48	122
Maysan	234	27	11
Diwaniyah	422	24	132
Karbala	1,102	15	325
Babylon	234	11	130
Wasit	529	5	142
Double	323	1	12
Diyala	3	3	13
Anbar	-	-	4
Salahaddin	-	-	1
Total	25,984	737	2,827



# Violations of freedom of opinion and expression

“We are living in a phase of «non-state» in Iraq, which has made the role of all local human rights organizations deficient and shackled. I hope that all international human rights organizations pay attention to our lost basic human rights and seek to protect us.”

**Russell Turki** - a medical student

Iraq is still witnessing a severe restriction on freedom of opinion and expression, under the pretext of applying law and maintaining public order. The Iraqi government security forces have arrested many activists and bloggers, under the pretext that they threaten societal peace, spread hatred, and ignite friction.

A number of bloggers and activists on social media confirmed to Euro-Med Monitor that they have received phone calls from unknown numbers threatening them with physical liquidation if they do not stop supporting the protests through their platforms and pages.

Euro-Med Monitor interviewed a group of activists and bloggers who gave their testimonies about the violations they were subjected to by the security

forces due to posts on their social media pages calling for the continuation of demonstrations and protests.



In an interview with Haider Radi Hawass, 28, who works as a chemical analyst at the Iraqi Ministry of Health in the Diwaniyah region, he said: “At the beginning of the Coronavirus crisis in Iraq, I posted a video to my page on 13 April 2020 in which I spoke about the negligence and indifference of the concerned authorities to the lives of people, for not informing us that one of our colleagues (a health worker) was infected with the Coronavirus. He was informed four hours later when satellite channels announced the first infected case in our city. Meanwhile, our colleague worked on treating several patients without knowing that he was infected, and he transmitted

the infection to all patients he has treated”.

He added, “I continued to attack the authorities for not providing the simplest supplies, such as gloves and masks, and for stealing them. I demanded them to provide ambulances to transport patients to hospitals. My manager and a number of officials informed me of the need to end the broadcast and threatened me with dismissal from my job. And all this was recorded on tape”.

“On the second day, while I was on my way leaving the hospital, I was surprised to be chased by black cars belonging to the Sadrist Movement, who control the Ministry of Health through their representation in parliament. I ran away from them, left my house, and went to a safe place for a period of time. After a few days, I was surprised by the governor of the city of Diwaniyah on one of the satellite channels threatening me with the maximum penalties for having talked about files related to corruption, negligence, and profiting off the suffering of people. The general director of the ministry of health in Diwaniyah promised to hold me accountable and establish a committee to investigate me. A group of people threatened me with physical liquidation if I do not stop talking about corruption and theft”.

In another interview with Sajjad Salem Hussein, 32, a lawyer and a professor at the Faculty of Law at Wasit University, he said: “I have been subjected to threats from several bodies, especially armed factions. These threats took the form of posts on Facebook and Twitter, accusing me of receiving support

from foreign bodies to carry out alleged plans with a group of demonstrators to oppose religion. I received threats and incitements following fabricated publications that included insulting religious figures in the Iraqi society in an attempt to provoke their followers against me.

“There were other forms of threats that I received through trusted persons who received messages from armed parties that they would target me if I continue to support the demonstrations. What I did with these threats was informing the security authorities that I was a target and held them responsible for protecting me and my family. They in turn protected my house fearing any assault against me”.

In another interview with Rasul Turki, 23, a medical student, she said: “On 9 September, 2020, I published a post on Facebook expressing my grief at the loss of a person living in my area, who died after an armed militia targeted a column of forces belonging to the International Coalition. However, local state forces were hit instead, and many individuals, including a person living in my area, were killed.

“After writing this post, I received many messages on Facebook threatening to fail me in the university if I did not stop writing these posts, and if I did not stop participating in the student protests. This threat was not the only one. I received another threat through a message on Facebook from an unknown party, threatening me with “unimaginable consequences” in case I did not stop my activities on social media or continued participating in the protests. My friend and I received this threat at the same time”.



# Torture and ill-treatment

“The party that arrested and tortured me is partisan, but I cannot determine which. My life is now in danger, my house is under surveillance, and my body suffers the effects of terrible physical and psychological torture. In addition, they were filming me during the torture”.

**Samer Kazem (nickname)** - a civil activist

Euro-Med Monitor received credible testimonies of torture and ill-treatment of demonstrators. Several testimonies of protesters who were subjected to torture and ill-treatment during detention said that it seems that the goal was to extract confessions from them, or to force them to sign papers of unknown content, or to punish them.

The victims interviewed by Euro-Med Monitor reported that torture took many forms. Such as electric shocks, suffocation, and suspension from



the ceiling from the limbs, beatings, strong-language threats, smacking, and verbal abuse.

Hussein Ali Khalaf, 20, who was formerly kidnapped from Wasit Governorate in southern Iraq said: “On March 6, 2020, while I was on my



way to the demonstrations, vehicles with masked men inside intercepted me. Six of them got out and started beating me. They blindfolded me and took me to an unknown place. I was held there for about 12 hours, during which, I was blindfolded and handcuffed. I was severely beaten all over my body. I was kicked repeatedly and continuously in

sensitive parts of my body and insulted with the worst words. They shaved my head in a humiliating way and threatened me with death if I continue participating in the demonstrations. At the end of that day, I was put in a car with a group of people, who threw me on the side of the road and fled. As soon as I removed the blindfold from my eyes, they were already gone, and I could not recognize them”.

“I went directly to the police station in my governorate to submit a report about the accident, and then the file was presented to the court in my region,



but until this moment I did not receive any significant results. I informed a person working in an international organization about what happened to me, hoping to know the perpetrators and

have protection. But I did not receive any response”.

In another interview with Mustafa Fadhil Al-Olawi, a civil activist, he said: “On Friday January 24, 2020, I was arrested by a group belonging to the Popular Mobilization security forces while I was at the Karrada area to the opposite of the National Theater in Baghdad. The group members were wearing black military uniform and they did not show me the arrest warrant. This group hit me with their car and beat me with sticks and metal tools, while shooting above my head, for three hours, which made me lose conscious. Then they took me to an unknown location, blindfolded me and put a bag



Samer Kazem (nickname)

on my head.

"During my detention, they did not allow my family to see me or know the location of my detention. They prevented me from appointing a lawyer, and I was not informed of any charges and they did not refer me to the judiciary. I Have been suffering from health conditions as a result of the harsh torture I was subjected to, and I have pictures to prove it."

In another interview with Samer Kadhim (nickname), a civil activist, he said, “On

17 January 2020, unidentified persons kidnapped me while I was in Tayaran Square in central Baghdad, where they took me to an unknown destination. "During detention, I was subjected to various forms of torture, including severe beatings, electric shocks, and physical and psychological violence. I suffer from fractures and bruises in my forearm, in addition to pain all over my body.

"After release, people who kidnapped me kept watching my house and I felt endangered. They threatened if I leave the house that I may be subjected to physical liquidation."



# Violations against Journalists

“The reality of the press is alarming amid an insecure working environment, the authoritarianism of parties and gangs, and the anarchy of weapons. Journalists cannot speak nor express their opinions, where they are forced to hide their names or to use nicknames while working on some files about cases of corruption. Writing my views on my personal page, I was threatened in public through comments on my posts. Journalism in Iraq is dangerous, where journalists risk their lives, reputation, and dignity for the sake of free journalism.”

**Samar Ahmed (nickname)** - a journalist and a specialist in women affairs

While Iraq globally ranked 156 out of 180 in countries covered in the freedom of the press report, it ranked 12 among Arab states in the freedom and security journalists enjoy around the world, based on Reporters Without Borders' annual report for 2019.

According to the same report, the freedom of the press in Iraq saw a substantial decline, which is, according to specialists and journalists, expected due to the incompatibility of legislations and laws and the constitution, impunity, and the restrictions on the press and freedom of expression.

Iraqi journalists were subjected to various violations, where more than 414 cases of violations against journalists and media professions have been

recorded throughout all Iraqi governorates since the spark of public protests. In response to demonstrations, violations against the freedom of expression saw a huge increase along with strict measures, adopted by the Iraqi authorities to suppress live coverage of protests and to limit the dissemination of information and opinions supporting them. Further, Iraqi governmental forces and unidentified armed forces committed targeted killings, kidnappings, threats, intimidations, and harassments against journalists who were covering and supporting the protests.



Beatings with batons and sharp tools, harassment and intimidation, and arbitrary detention outside the law were among various violations committed against the media professionals and journalists. In addition,

journalists were forced to delete media content such as photographs, media reports, and other content, and a large number of them were detained after their attempt to record live TV-interviews with the protesters.

Measures and violations to restrict the freedom of expression and the crimes committed against demonstrators led to narrowing down the freedom journalists have to do their work. While this led many journalists to take self-protection measures during their fieldwork, others were forced to relocate their place of residence to ensure their and their families' safety.

Journalists and media professionals were prevented from doing any media coverage, and 27 of them were assassinated and two were kidnapped. As various violations were committed, 28 cases of explicit death threats, 35 cases of detention, and 225 cases of beatings were recorded. Further, the National Communications and Media Commission closed some news media offices and suspended some others while 12 media outlets were closed across various governorates under the pretext that they violated the rules of broadcasting regulations.

While Iraq saw a substantial and serious decline in the freedom of press work, cracking down on journalists increased, where 16 lawsuits were filed against them. Violations committed against them significantly increased as Baghdad became the most dangerous governorate in Iraq when it comes to journalism. It recorded about 150 violations followed by Basrah with more than 60 violations.

Regarding the freedom of opinion and expression in Iraq, **Tahseen Al-Zarkani**, the chairman of the Board of Directors of Iraq Pen Center and an editor of the Electronic New World Journal, stated:

“In Iraq, freedom of expression as a right is completely renounced. Nowadays, the reality is to support the Iraqi regime; otherwise, you are an enemy. What happened in the October Revolution in 2019 is just an example among many where the right of freedom of expression was grossly violated. In addition, the city of Basrah more than 2,000 arrests and investigation warrants against activists and journalists. Further, there is a systematic policy to create a generation that will only praise governments.”

He added that “the press, especially during the times of demonstrations and tumultuous events in the country, see various violations committed against journalists such as detentions, threats, intimidations, and killings by parties in front of security services. In the last two years, most journalists who have been covering the demonstrations were hit by tear gas, live bullets, or were assassinated with silenced guns by unknown snipers. Further, their equipment was either confiscated or destroyed.”

Euro-Med Monitor’s field researchers conducted a round of interviews with journalists who had been subjected to violations by the Iraqi security forces and armed militias. They talked about the nature of these violations and said documenting public protests and reporting violations was the reason behind it.



In an interview with the Baghdad-based Asia Network Television's field reporter, **Muhammad Hamida**, he said: "On December 3rd, 2019, Al-Anbar Operations Command, the Joint Security Forces (Hawks Army) stopped me during work at Al Anbar Governorate while recording a media report talking about going back to the normal lifestyle in Bohirate Al-Hyatia governorate. They prevented the press team from entering the governorate, verbally attacked them, and tried to confiscate their equipment but the team refused to give them away".

He added, "At that time, we tried to convince the officer that we are a media agency that is officially authorized, and we showed them our media cards that prove that. The officer, however, completely refused, questioned our credibility, and verbally attacked us. In return, we had no choice but to obey and returned back without doing our work".

"The Federation of Journalists of Iraq, local human rights centers, and civil society institutions express condemnations every time journalists are subjected to violations. However, it is really a shame that government agencies have been and are still silent about such violations," he continued. In another interview with NAS news' reporter and member of the Federation of Journalists of Iraq, **Nabil Al-Jubouri**, he said: "On October 1st 2019, masked government forces with black uniforms beat and prevented me from covering the demonstration that sparked on that day in Al Diwaniyah city to the south of Baghdad. Demonstrations sparked in the central and

southern governorates and the capital. While I was working during the demonstrations, a group of gunmen attacked me without saying a word, which caused me severe physical harm and a lack of breathing; I was hospitalized”.

He added, “although we have our identification cards and wore press uniforms, those forces intentionally repeated such acts of violence against a number of my colleagues. All these violations were intentional and never stopped. While we kept covering the ongoing demonstrations and protests, members of influential parties wearing plainclothes kept committing violations against us. They were creating crises and problems, so they could intervene and attack us and the other journalists”.

“We went to the jurisdiction and the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) to document these attacks and demand holding the perpetrators accountable. It has nearly been a year, and these procedures are in a vicious circle. Further, the complaints we issued have not been resolved, nor have we been given protection. Therefore, it is still dangerous for us, which may force many people to seek a safer place outside the country for the sake of protection,” he continued.

In another interview with Altaghier TV’s photographer, **Hassanein Faleh Al-Mayahi**, he said: “On October 1st 2019 at 4:30 p.m., I was assigned to cover the public protests. While covering the protests that sparked in Al Diwaniyah governorate, I observed a number of violations committed by security forces

against peaceful demonstrators and journalists such as attacking them with electric sticks, beating them with batons, and verbally assaulting them. I was harassed by a group of officers and security forces to prevent me from documenting how demonstrations were really suppressed and to keep me away from the demonstration square as possible. I had to leave the place after the officer said to me: ‘Get yourself and your camera away or you will be severely beaten and then detained’. Another one said to me ‘you are the ones who fuel the situation through sending news and shooting videos using your cameras’”.

He added, “I went to the closest building that overlooks the demonstration, so I could take good shots for the news report I was assigned to do. I went to the fourth floor. While I was filming, I was surprised by the presence of four members of the intelligence forces and another member of the Tactical Team. They asked me to handover my equipment, so I told them I am a journalist working for Altaghier TV. They asked for the memory card of my camera, which I refused to give them. One of them slapped me in the face and started beating me all over my body. Then, they forced me to leave the building and confiscated my equipment. When I arrived at the ground floor, I found a security officer with a mask carrying a hunting rifle; he pointed it at me after he withdrew the operating handle and pressed the safety lever and said: “Handover your equipment or I will shoot you.” Other officers prevented him from killing me. Then, the commander asked

them to imprison me, with my colleagues preventing them from doing so. This caused them trouble as they were beaten. While my colleague Zaid Al-Fatlawi, a reporter at Dijlah TV, was electrocuted by an electric stick, other colleagues Muhammad Hassan, Altaghier TV's reporter, Muhammad al-Bolani, Dijlah TV's photographer, and Alahad TV's photographer, Mustafa Al-Mayahi, were all beaten with batons and sticks and were verbally insulted just because they prevented security forces from detaining me."

"After that, I was released, and I restored my equipment. However, the Deputy Director of Intelligence confiscated my camera's memory card, which I could not restore until now. Then, I was threatened if I don't leave the demonstrations, I will be imprisoned and my children's lives will be at risk," he continued.



## Kidnapping and Enforced Disappearance

“Those who are secretly abducted live in a great suffering. The reason is that their families have no idea where they are, and no one can help them. Even if they survive death and then get released, psychological and physical impacts will keep chasing them for too long.”

**Dr.Ayman Al-Ani** - Director of the Ikram Center for Human Rights

In light of the ongoing public protests in Iraq, concerns about enforced disappearance are mounting in the country. Since the spark of these protests, government forces and armed militias suppressed them and committed violations of killing, kidnapping, and enforced disappearance against demonstrators, where the fate of most of them became unknown. Human rights reports documented the number of abducted and disappeared protesters, which reached 75. While 22 of them were released, 53 are still disappeared and their fate is unknown.

“No one knows how we felt during the 12 days except those who lived a similar experience. They were hard days that no one can bear. It is extremely heartbreaking when someone disappears and you know nothing about him/her.”

**Saba Al Mahdaoui's family**

Euro-Med Monitor's team conducted a number of interviews with the abducted people's families. They stated that abductions carry gross violations as families know nothing about their children's location or what is happening to them, which adds to the families' anxiety.

In an interview with the family of 37-year-old victim, **Saba Al Mahdaoui**, they stated that "on November 2, 2019, at 11:30 p.m. Saba was in the Tahrir Square,



where demonstrations took place. She is not affiliated with any party, and her participation was just a way of expressing her personal views.

She told us she will be home soon. Yet, contact with her was completely lost, and we kept looking for her but in vain. Then, we filed a report of kidnapping to the police station. They reviewed the street surveillance cameras and it turned out the place where she was kidnapped had no cameras."

They added, "We continued searching for her with no avail. After 12 days of her kidnapping, however, Saba came back and said: At night, a number of cars

stopped me, where ten masked gunmen wearing plainclothes threatened me and then took me handcuffed and blindfolded to an unknown place. During the 12 days, she was kept in a solitary confinement. They questioned her several times. She, however, confirmed that she was not exposed to any kind of violations and kidnappers were providing her with basic needs until they released her. On the way to the place where she was kidnapped, they asked her not to look around at all, or they will shoot her”.

In another interview with 28-year-old civil activist, **Ahmed Fadel Al-Aqili**, he said: “On Friday, January 18, 2020, at 1 a.m., a group of masked people wearing black kidnapped me while I was near the entrance of Sadr City, leading to Al Falah Street. Kidnappers did not show any arrest warrant. They took me to an unknown place, took my phone and 120,000 dollars that was with me and started torturing me with an electric stick. They sharply rebuked me, beat me with batons, sticks, and sharp tools, and threatened me with physical violence and rape.”

He added “I was blindfolded. They denied me calling my family or my lawyer and accused me of malicious charges including communicating foreign parties. During the interrogation, I was subjected to various forms of torture because I kept refuting their claims. Therefore, they stripped me naked outdoors and pinned me to a palm tree, and then severely beat me. They pour ice-cold water on my head; they electrocuted my right foot and forced me to confess things I did not do”.

“After days, I was set free, where they threw me in a place I don’t know. I took a taxi to the closest police station. When I arrived, I asked to call my brothers to take me home,” he continued.

In another interview with the father of 30-year-old victim, **Ali Jaseb Hattab**, he said: “My son was one of the prominent supporters of Iraqi demonstrations. He is a lawyer and a member of the committee that Iraq Bar Association established to follow up with the file of abducted protesters. He is a social media activist, where he severely criticizes whoever violates Iraqis’ rights.” He added, “On October 8, 2019, Ali was kidnapped. He was lured by a phone call, where the caller, who is a woman, impersonated a client asking him to help with a case. They agreed to meet near the AlRawi Mosque in the middle of Amarah city in Maysan Governorate. A few hours after he went for the meeting, we lost connection with him, and until now, we do not know his location.”

“We contacted the telecommunications company, Asiacell, to know the person who called Ali. It turned out the number is for a person named Haider Mezher Muallaq Gharawi. He is the Secretary-General of Hizbollah Al-Awfiiaa Militia. It was confirmed when the National Security followed up with Ali’s case. With the help of the National Security, we are trying to find my son Ali, whom until now, we know nothing about,” he continued.



## A list of the names of the abducted demonstrators

NO.	The name of the abducted persons	Date	Place	Kidnapper
1	Ali Jaseb Hattab	2019/10/08	Maysan	Armed Militias
2	Hisham Alsumary	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
3	Wissam Dahabi	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
4	Wasfi Taher Al-Ibrahimi	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
5	Ali Mengal	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
6	Ammar Hammadi	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
7	Karrar Alsrfi	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
8	Ali Hussain Al-Amel	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
9	Uday al-Jabri	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
10	Sajjad Al-Gharib	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
11	Haider Shaitan	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
12	Hussein Al-Amel	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
13	Ahmed Sajit Al-Ghazi	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
14	Abu Jaafar al-Askari	2019/10/27	Nasiriyah	Asa'ib Militia
15	Amer Al Nuaimi	2019/11/15	Baghdad	Joint Force
16	Ahmed Baqir Al-Bakli	2019/11/16	Baghdad	Armed Militias
17	Shuja Al-Khafaji	2019/11/17	Baghdad	Joint Force
18	Ziad Hadi Muhammad	2019/11/22	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Armed Militias

19	Zaid Al-Khafaji	2019/12/06	Baghdad	Armed Militias
20	Abbas Hadi Al Saadawi	2019/12/08	Baghdad	Armed Militias
21	Amir al-Asadi	2019/12/11	Baghdad	Armed Militias
22	Muhammad Ghassan	2019/12/11	Baghdad	Armed Militias
23	Ali Riad Mohamed Karim	2019/12/22	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Armed Militias
24	The child: Adel Uday Al-Zubeidi	2019/12/22	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Security Forces
25	Hammoudi Riad Mohamed Karim	2019/12/22	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Armed Militias
26	Ahmed Hassan Hashem	2019/12/23	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Armed Militias
27	Ahmed El Ghalib	2019/12/25	Baghdad	Armed Militias
28	Mohammed Khudair Hussein Aal	2020/01/05	Wasit Governorate	Swat Forces
29	The journalist: Salman Al-Yasiri	2020/01/12	Karbala	Armed Militias
30	Salam Al-Eqabi	2020/01/12	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Armed Militias
31	Abdul-Qahar Al-Ani	2020/01/15	Baghdad	Armed Militias
32	Ahmed Taj	2020/01/17	Baghdad	Armed Militias
33	Ahmed Alaa Darraji	2020/01/17	Tayeran Square/ Baghdad	Armed Militias
34	Ahmed Fadel	2020/01/18	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Armed Militias
35	Ismail Shaheen	2020/01/18	Karbala	Government Forces
36	Jafar Al-Nasrawi	2020/01/18	Karbala	Armed Militias
37	Hazem Hammoudi	2020/01/18	Karbala	Armed Militias
38	Moqtada Ismail Shadhan	2020/01/18	Karbala	Government Forces
39	Idris Abdul Karim al-Samarrai	2020/01/20	Baghdad	Armed Militias

40	Ibrahim Al Sudani	2020/01/21	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Military Intelligence
41	Ayd Al-Dujaili	2020/01/21	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Military Intelligence
42	Adel Talib	2020/01/21	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Military Intelligence
43	Mustafa Al-Olayani	2020/01/24	Jadriyah/Baghdad	Swat Forces
44	Mohammed Fadel Al-Aboudi	2020/01/27	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Armed Militias
45	Mazen Latif	2020/01/31	Mutanabbi Street/ Baghdad	Armed Militias
46	Karrar Abdul Hussein	2020/02/05	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Armed Militias
47	Sheikh Abdul Rahman Barzanji	2020/02/07	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Armed Militias
48	Muhammad Al-Issawi	2020/02/08	Najaf	Armed Militias
49	Haider Al-Halfi	2020/02/08	Baghdad/ Tahrir Square	Armed Militias
50	Mustafa Najm	2020/02/10	Senna St/ Baghdad	Armed Militias
51	Amjad Maghrib	2020/02/11	Baghdad	Armed Militias
52	Karrar Al-Amiri	2020/02/11	Baghdad	Armed Militias

## Legal Background

The violations, such as enforced disappearance and torture, that Iraqi governmental forces and armed militias committed against journalists and press work and freedom of opinion and expression are prohibited by International and Iraqi domestic laws.

- **First: The freedom of press and the practice of press work**

International and domestic Laws guaranteed the protection of this right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, stipulates that “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

In the Arab Charter on Human Rights 2004, Article 38 ensures the right to information, freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, freedom to seek, receive and impart information by all means, regardless of frontiers. Regarding domestic laws, the Iraqi Constitution, in Article 38, guaranteed the freedom of press and expression as well as the freedom of press, printing, advertisement, media and publication as long as it doesn't violate the law.

- **Second: The Freedom of Opinion and Expression**

In the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19 stipulates that “everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall

include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice”.

Similarly, in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Article 9 stipulates that “every individual shall have the right to receive information. Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law”.

In domestic laws, the Iraqi Constitution, in Article 38, stipulates that “The State shall guarantee in a way that does not violate public order and morality, freedom of expression using all means”.

### • **Third: Enforced Disappearance**

There are some legal provisions and conventions that prohibit enforced disappearance, the most prominent of which is the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED). Iraq was the 20th country to ratify this convention; therefore, Iraq must abide by the convention’s provisions that prohibit enforced disappearance. In the convention, Article one stipulates that “no one shall be subjected to enforced disappearance, and no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for enforced disappearance.”

Additionally, the Iraqi Constitution guaranteed the right to safety and freedom for every person as Article 19 in the Constitution prohibits imprisonment



or detention in places that are not designed for these purposes, and the preliminary investigative documents shall be submitted to the competent judge in a period not to exceed 24 hours.

Further, the Iraqi Panel Code stipulates that any employee or worker who is entrusted with a public task detains or imprisons a person in circumstances other than those stipulated in the law will be punished by a term of imprisonment not exceeding ten years.

- **Forth: The right to peaceful assembly**

Peaceful assembly is one of the most prominent violated rights in Iraq recently. Despite the multiple legal provisions and International Laws that guarantee the right to peaceful assembly, Iraqi security forces and partisan militias use excessive force and suppression against protesters which caused the death and injury of dozens of them.

The most important of these legal provisions are Articles 18 and 22 in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, and Articles 9 and 11 in the European Convention on Human Rights 1950, which stipulate that “1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests. 2. No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State”.

Regarding domestic laws, the Iraqi Constitution on the right to freedom of expression, press, media, and peaceful assembly and association, stipulates in Article 38 that:

“The State shall guarantee in a way that does not violate public order and morality: First. Freedom of expression using all means. Second. Freedom of press, printing, advertisement, media and publication. Third. Freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration, and this shall be regulated by law”.

- **Fifth: The right to freedom from torture**

Similarly, legal provisions and international conventions guarantee this right. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7, stipulates that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation”.

Article 2 of The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment stipulates that “no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture”.

In the Iraqi Constitution, Article 37 stipulates that “all forms of psychological and physical torture and inhumane treatment are prohibited. Any

confession made under force, threat, or torture shall not be relied on, and the victim shall have the right to seek compensation for material and moral damages incurred in accordance with the law”.

In the Iraqi Penal Code with Amendments NO (111) 1969, Paragraph 333 stipulates that “any public official or agent who tortures or orders the torture of an accused, witness or informant in order to compel him to confess to the commission of an offence or to make a statement or provide information about such offence or to withhold information or to give a particular opinion in respect of it is punishable by imprisonment or by detention. Torture shall include the use of force or menaces”.

## Recommendations

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor recommends the following:

1. Iraqi authorities should take immediate and appropriate measures to locate the abducted and disappeared demonstrators and work to assure their immediate release.
2. The Iraqi judicial authority should prosecute those who planned, demanded, or helped in committing violations of killing, kidnapping, and torture whether they were an entity or persons, and should immediately open necessary investigations against them.
3. All demonstrators should be allowed to exercise their rights related to fair trial procedures. Those rights include appointing a lawyer, knowing the charges against them, and possessing the ability to defend themselves in accordance with domestic and International laws.
4. The Iraqi authorities should reconsider domestic laws and have them amended in light of International Law on Human Rights regarding the use of force and confronting protesters to enable them to exercise their rights; in particular, the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
5. The Iraqi authorities should ensure safety and order in accordance with law, dismantle outlawed armed militias, and put an end to the state of chaos that curtail various types of freedoms in the country.

6. The Iraqi authorities should put an end to intimidation, harassment, arbitrary detention, and kidnappings by the governmental security forces and armed militias against peaceful protestors
7. The Iraqi authorities should put an end to all violations against journalists and human rights defenders and those who seek to document violations and allow all medical staff to properly do their work at protests squares without any restrictions.
8. The international community should fulfill its obligations through exerting pressure on the Iraqi government to put an end to the increasing violations since October 2019.
9. The Iraqi authorities should respect all the fundamental rights of Iraqis guaranteed by domestic and International Laws such as the right to life, the right to liberty and personal security, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, and other fundamental rights.





Euro-Med Human  
Rights Monitor  
الأورومتوسطي لحقوق الإنسان

Maison des Associations Rue  
des Savoises 15 CH-1205  
Genève

جنيف - سويسرا

info@euromedmonitor.org

www.euromedmonitor.org