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Submitted by: The Gulf Centre for Human Rights

The Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights

The Metro Centre for Journalist Rights and Advocacy

Front Line Defenders

The Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative

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The Gulf Centre for Human Rights: The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) is an independent, non-profit NGO founded in April 2011. GCHR provides support and protection to human rights defenders in the Gulf region and neighbouring countries in order to promote human rights, including but not limited to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. <https://www.gc4hr.org/>

The Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights: The Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR) was founded in 2013 by a group of journalists and human rights defenders in order to put pressure on the Iraqi authorities to abide by national laws and international conventions that preserve human dignity regardless of race, colour, form, religion, sect or nationality. <https://rights-iq.org/en/home-page>

The Metro Centre for Journalist Rights and Advocacy: The Metro Centre for Journalists Rights and Advocacy was founded by a group of journalists in 2009, in cooperation with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). Since its establishment, the Metro Centre has implemented numerous projects and activities in connection with (IWPR), the Danish International Media Support (IMS), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), and Democracy and Human Rights Development Centre (DHRD), aiming to broaden the scope of freedom of expression in Kurdistan Region of Iraq and reduce violations against journalists. <http://metrroo.org/english/>

Front Line Defenders: Front Line Defenders was founded in Dublin in 2001 with the specific aim of protecting human rights defenders at risk (HRDs), people who work, non-violently, for any or all of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Front Line Defenders addresses the protection needs identified by HRDs themselves. <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/>

The Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative: The Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI) is dedicated to bringing together Iraqi and international civil societies through concrete actions to build together another Iraq, with peace and Human Rights for all. <https://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/>

Summary

1. The Gulf Centre for Human Rights, the Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights, the Metro Centre for Journalist Rights and Advocacy, Front Line Defenders, and the Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative submit this report to inform the examination of Iraq during its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in November 2019. This submission focuses on the situation of human rights defenders and journalists in Iraq and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, freedom of expression and opinion, freedom of assembly and association and the situation with regards to women human rights defenders.
2. Since Iraq's last UPR review in 2014, Iraq's war against Da'esh (previously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or ISIL) has caused the displacement of six million Iraqis – around 15 per cent of the entire population of the country. In December 2017, former Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared the end of the country's war against Da'esh.¹
3. As Iraq transitions from a period of conflict, human rights defenders and civil society at large continue to play an important role in influencing the future direction of Iraq and its compliance with international human rights standards and democratic principles. Following its last UPR review in 2014, Iraq accepted the recommendations to continue its efforts to promote and protect human rights in the country and to guarantee and create an enabling environment for the activities of journalists, human rights defenders and civil society. However, human rights defenders and civil society organisations have been operating at immense risk and we have documented a high number of killings, repression, threats and violence against human rights defenders, civil society organisations and journalists during the current reporting period.
4. Since 2014, there has been a proliferation of demonstrations in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for an improvement in basic service provision and the protection and promotion of economic and social rights. A large number of violations have been recorded during these protests, such as the arbitrary arrest of protesters and the use of disproportionate violence and repression by security forces. There has been an alarmingly high rate of injuries and killings at protests, with a worrying trend towards brutal retaliation and repression against journalists covering the protests.
5. This submission first sets out patterns of violations against human rights defenders in Part II. Part III will elaborate on violations relating to freedom of expression and opinion, with a specific focus on journalists in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Finally, Part IV will examine the increasingly restrictive and repressive environment for exercising the right to freedom of assembly and association. In this respect, the report will focus on violations in the context of protests calling for the provision of basic services and economic and social rights, in both Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/iraqi-general-war-isil-171209120757374.html>

I. Patterns of violations against human rights defenders

6. This section highlights the most significant patterns of human rights violations committed against human rights defenders in Iraq. Human rights defenders in Iraq are at risk of violence, loss of life, threats, intimidation, criminalisation and arbitrary detention in retaliation against their work in protecting and promoting human rights in Iraq. Such violations are often met with impunity as perpetrators of attacks against human rights defenders are routinely stated as unidentifiable or unknown by the Iraqi authorities. In their report from December 2018, the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International warned that when an investigation into a killing or an attack against a human rights defender is launched, it usually fails to result in the identification of the perpetrators or justice for the victim.²

Iraq's International Treaty Obligations towards Human Rights Defenders

7. Iraq has a responsibility under international treaty law to respect, protect, and fulfil the human rights of those within its territory or otherwise subject to its jurisdiction and to create an enabling environment for human rights defenders and civil society to carry out their work.³ Iraq also has a constitutional obligation to “strengthen the role of civil society institutions, and to support, develop and preserve their independence in a way that is consistent with peaceful means to achieve their legitimate goals,” as per Article 45(i) of the Constitution of Iraq.⁴ We also wish to highlight the standards set by the 1998 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which maintains that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms and that each state has a prime responsibility and duty to protect human rights defenders against any violence, threats or retaliation.⁵

² See report by the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International, December 2018, p.18. https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/MRG_CFRRep_IraqCiv_EN_Dec18_FINAL2.pdf

³ Iraq is a party to eighth of the nine core international human rights treaties, as follows: International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ratified 1971); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified 1971); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ratified 1970); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (acceded 1986); Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (acceded in 2011); Convention on the Rights of the Child (acceded in 1994); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (acceded 2013) and the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (acceded 2010). Iraq is also party to the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (acceded 2008) and on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (acceded 2008).

⁴ Iraqi Constitution 2005, Art. 45(i).

⁵ United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, 1998, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/770/89/PDF/N9977089.pdf?OpenElement>

Impunity for the Killing of Human Rights Defenders

8. The HRD Memorial Project, which is a joint initiative by a network of national and international human rights organisations to celebrate the lives and achievements of all the human rights defenders who have been killed since the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders came into effect in 1998, has documented several killings of human rights defenders in Iraq during the current reporting period. While the list is by no means exhaustive, the cases documented demonstrate a worrying pattern of impunity in bringing the perpetrators of these killings to justice, the now deceased human rights defenders' previous exposure to threats and the particular vulnerability of human rights defenders working on economic and social rights, women's rights and freedom of expression.⁶
9. In this regard, we wish to highlight the following cases: First, the assassination of Kurdish human rights defender, **Iqbal Muradi**, who was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Sulaymaniyah on 17 July 2018. Iqbal advocated for the rights of political prisoners and was a member of the Kurdistan Human Rights Group (KMMK). Second, the assassination of woman human rights defender, **Su'ad Al-Ali**, who was a defender of women's rights, and social and economic rights, as well as a prominent leader of the 2018 demonstrations in Basra, protesting unemployment and demanding jobs and proper public services for citizens. The human rights defender was killed as she returned to her car in the Al-Abbasiyah district in downtown Basra on 25 September, 2018. Third, the assassination of human rights defender and journalist, **Dr. Alaa Mashthob Abboud**, who was shot dead in front of his home in Karbala. Dr. Abboud was a member of the Syndicate of Artists, the Journalists' Syndicate, the General Federation of Writers and Writers, and the Society for Peace and Solidarity in Iraq. At the time of this report, in none of these cases was a suspect arrested.
10. These three cases demonstrate a climate of insecurity, inadequate protection and impunity for the killing of human rights defenders in Iraq. This exerts a chilling effect on other human rights defenders who legitimately fear that their safety, security, and ultimately, their lives, are compromised as a result of their human rights work.

Human Rights Defenders Working on Enforced Disappearances

11. Since the last UPR review of Iraq in 2014 and the end of the war with Da'esh, human rights defenders working on cases related to the incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance of persons suspected of having ties to Da'esh, have been targeted. The detention of a number of human rights defenders working on these issues as members of Al-Wissam Humanitarian Assembly, has been documented.

⁶ HRD Memorial Project, Iraq page, https://hrdmemorial.org/?filter-form=submitted®ion=215&country=1255&state=&s=&nickname=&sex=&start_date=&end_date=&submit=

12. In July 2018, **Imad Al-Tamimi**, a volunteer with Al-Wissam Humanitarian Assembly, was abducted in Baghdad by members of the Special Weapons and Tactics Unit (SWAT), who failed to provide a warrant or present any motive for arrest. Al-Tamimi was forced into a pick-up truck, taken to an unknown location where he was detained and interrogated under torture regarding his relationship with Al-Wissam and his knowledge of “Jurf Sakhar”, a secret detention facility operated by the Hezbollah Brigades. Prior to his release on 7 September 2018, Tamimi was forced to sign a document stating that he would no longer participate in anything related to enforced disappearances in Iraq.
13. On 27 August 2018, **Israa Al-Dujaili** was also threatened as she emerged from a shop in Baghdad where she collected posters advertising events organised by Al-Wissam on the occasion of the 2018 International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearances. As she left the shop, a group of unknown men, suspected to be connected to the Iraqi National Intelligence Service, questioned her about the posters and threatened her for her participation in the aforementioned event.

Women Human Rights Defenders in Iraq:

14. Following the last UPR review of Iraq in 2014, Iraq accepted no fewer than twenty-seven recommendations relating to women’s rights and gender equality, among which were recommendations to promote women’s participation in public life as per UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopt a national policy for the protection of women and women human rights defenders, adopt measures to fight violence against women and combat all discrimination against women both in law and in practise.
15. In his recent thematic report which focused on the situation of women human rights defenders, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, stated the following: “Women defenders often face additional and different risks and obstacles that are gendered, intersectional and shaped by entrenched gender stereotypes and deeply held ideas and norms about who women are and how women should be. Women, for example, can be stigmatized for the very same actions for which men are venerated. Women are often perceived not as agents of change but as vulnerable or victimized persons in need of protection by others, typically men.”⁷
16. The Special Rapporteur’s assessment of the challenges facing women human rights defenders is representative of those facing women human rights defenders in Iraq who face substantial hurdles, in the public as well as private sphere, in overcoming traditional notions of family, gender identities and gender roles and are regularly perceived as overturning normative cultural, political and social constructs.
17. In 2016, **Nibras Al-Maamouri**, head of the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum (IWJF), reported that she had received anonymous death threats, demanding that she abandon her media career and cease her work as a human rights defender. She was vilified on social media, facing accusations of terrorism and collusion with foreign extremist groups.⁸

⁷ Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders to the fortieth session of the UN Human Rights Council, 25 February–22 March 2019, *Situation of women human rights defenders*, p.2. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/004/97/PDF/G1900497.pdf?OpenElement>

⁸ Report by the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International, December 2018, p.21.

18. In the national report submitted by Iraq during its last UPR review, the Government outlined a number of legislative and policy reforms that had been undertaken or were underway in order to combat gender stereotypes and violence against women. This included the adoption of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women in 2013. However, although the Iraqi Parliament has been reviewing a draft anti-domestic violence law since 2015, it has faced ideological opposition on religious grounds and is currently at a standstill.
19. While the Kurdistan Regional Authorities (KRG), have enacted a law on domestic violence, Iraq continues to lack a legal framework for protecting survivors of domestic violence. Compounding this, a number of discriminatory laws such as the criminalisation of adultery under the 1969 Penal Code of Iraq, maintain and perpetuate gender stereotypes, increasing women’s risk of violence and difficulties in partaking in public life. Such laws and policies relegate women to the private sphere where they lack legal protection from domestic abuse – which is often disregarded as a private and domestic issue.⁹
20. The lack of a robust legislative framework on domestic violence, which runs concurrently to a broader climate of gender inequality and stereotypes in Iraq, has negative implications for women human rights defenders, particularly those working on issues such as domestic violence due to the surrounding stigma.
21. On 13 April 2018, the UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights defenders, violence against women and freedom of assembly and association, expressed their concerns to the Government of Iraq in relation to the forced entry and search of the **Organisation of Women’s Freedom in Iraq (OWFI)** and the removal of a victim of domestic violence who was receiving psychological support from OWFI, by approximately fifty armed persons, including police officers.¹⁰

II. Violations relating to freedom of expression and opinion

22. Despite accepting a recommendation to “guarantee respect of freedom of opinion and expression, by safeguarding the security of journalists and the independence of the media”, the current reporting period has witnessed severe repression of the rights to freedom of expression and opinion.

The legal framework and attempts to introduce restrictive legislation

23. Although, Article 38 of the Iraqi Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the press that does not violate “public order and morality”, the 1969 Penal Code creates a highly restrictive legal environment as the Code criminalises defamation (Art.433) and makes it a crime to insult any public institution or official (Art.226), insult a public body (Art.229), insult religious values (Art.372), or insult another in a manner that offends them or compromises their honour or status (Art.434).
24. In recent years, Iraq has attempted to render the above restrictions applicable to the digital age by drafting legislation to reproduce the existing restrictions on speech online.

⁹ Commentary by Human Rights Watch on the Draft Law on Anti-Domestic Violence in Iraq, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/19/commentary-draft-law-anti-domestic-violence-iraq>.

¹⁰ Allegation letter by the UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights defenders, violence against women and the rights to freedom of assembly and association to the Government of Iraq, 13 April 2018, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=23743>.

25. New attempts to introduce legislation which would restrict the rights to freedom of expression and opinion online are underway and in its session on 12 January 2019, the Iraqi parliament completed its first reading of the draft Cybercrime Law, which includes punishment amounting to life imprisonment and fines of between 21,000 and 42,000 USD for vague offences including, under Article 3 of the draft law, “the use of computers and the information network for the purpose of committing information crimes such as to prejudice the independence, unity, integrity or economic, political, military or security interests of the country.” The text of this article is open to interpretation due to its broad nature and ambiguity, which raises concerns that if passed, the law will be used to target human rights defenders, opponents of government policies or leaders of peaceful protests who engage in human rights work online.¹¹

Violations against journalists covering anti-austerity protests in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

26. In 2018, the Metro Centre for Journalists Rights and Advocacy registered complaints from 264 journalists and media associations in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, recording 349 violations.
27. A large number of these violations occurred in the context of journalistic coverage of anti-austerity demonstrations by civil servants protesting against salary cuts in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In March 2018 alone, the Metro Centre recorded thirty-three violations committed against journalists, the vast majority of which related to coverage of demonstrations. For instance, on 25 March 2018, security forces of the Erbil governorate impeded the NRT press team from covering a demonstration and on 27 March 2018, security forces of the Erbil governorate attacked two NRT press teams, impeded their coverage of demonstrations, detained the journalists and confiscated their equipment. The journalists, **Hersh Qadir, Amanj Sami, Renas Ali and Karzan Karim** remain in detention at the time of this report.

Violations against journalists covering protests in Basra

28. Journalists were also targeted, threatened and killed while covering the July 2018 protests demanding the provision of basic services and economic and social rights in Basra, and during the months that followed.
29. On 20 July 2018, journalist and human rights defender **Ahmed Al-Shaibani** received a death threat via text message from an unknown number. This text message coincided with the circulation on social media networks of an official document, issued by security services, accusing Al-Shaibani of "incitement to a coup." Al-Shaibani covered the demonstrations in Basra, in his city Diwaniyah, and in other cities in central and southern Iraq, including Baghdad.

¹¹ Gulf Centre for Human Rights, “Freedom of opinion and expression at risk under new Cybercrime Law which imposes penalties of life imprisonment.” <https://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/2039>

30. We have received reliable reports that on 14 and 15 July 2018, the Iraqi government blocked Internet access across the country's central and southern regions, including the capital Baghdad, in an attempt to stop the spread of news updates related to ongoing protests, which started in Basra on 8 July 2018 when the security forces responded to a peaceful demonstration with live bullets, killing protestor Asaad Al-Mansouri and wounding three other demonstrators. Although Internet services resumed on 16 July, access to social media continued to be restricted.¹²
31. On the night of 9 January 2019, **Samer Ali Hussain**, a photojournalist working for Al Hurra Iraq TV channel, was killed in unknown circumstances. The Al-Quds police station in Baghdad informed his family that his body was found with gunshot wounds at Army Canal, east of the capital. Police also reported that his car, personal documents, telephone, and all his belongings had disappeared.
32. The targeting of journalists has included arbitrary arrests of journalists covering protests and confiscation of their equipment. On 27 January 2019, security forces confiscated the transmission and communication equipment of Kurdish TV channel NRT in Duhok governorate and suspended the channel. Five staff members of NRT were detained for several hours by the security authorities in relation to their coverage of protests against the presence of Turkish troops in the governorate.

III. Violations relating to the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association

33. Article 38 of the Iraqi Constitution of 2005 guarantees protection of the rights to freedom of assembly and association that does not violate "public order and morality." However, restrictions remain in place in primary legislation such as the 2003 Provisional Order 19, adopted by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which has not been repealed. Under CPA Order 19, barriers to assembly and association include the necessity to provide advanced notice in writing of the location, number of persons participating and the names and addresses of the organisers, at least 24 hours before the start of a march, assembly, meeting or gathering on roadways, public thoroughfares or public places. Any violation of Order 19 may lead to a sentence of up to one year in prison.¹³ Furthermore, in 2011 the Baghdad governorate issued new regulations which require protest organisers to apply for permission seven days prior to a demonstration.
34. Following the 2014 UPR review, Iraq accepted the recommendation to "bring national legislation in accordance with international standards to fully guarantee freedom of expression, association and assembly."

Violations of the rights to freedom of assembly and association in the context of the demonstrations in Basra

35. In recent years, the Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights has documented a pattern of repression and violence against protestors demonstrating for an improvement in services such as water, electricity and medical services in Iraq. A high number of fatalities and injuries from excessive use of force by security forces has been documented, accompanied by a high rate of impunity and lack of effective investigations into killings and violence committed in the context of protests.

¹² Oracle Internet Intelligence, "Internet in Iraq returns after two-day blackout." <https://internetintel.oracle.com/blog-single.html?id=Internet+in+Iraq+Returns+After+Two-Day+Blackout>

¹³ International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), "Civic Freedom Monitor: Iraq," <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/iraq.html>.

36. On 29 June 2017, a demonstrator was killed in the province of Najaf while he participated in a protest highlighting poor services in the region. On 30 June 2017, the Iraqi Interior Ministry launched an investigation into the killing but as of publication of this report, the perpetrator has not been brought to justice.
37. Protests demanding an improvement in basic services have also been met with repression and violence in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. On 19 December 2017, seven demonstrators were killed and ninety-three others were injured by security forces during a demonstration in Sulaymaniyah province for an improvement in living conditions and service provision. The Kurdistan Regional Government is yet to identify and hold the perpetrators accountable.
38. Protests against poor service provision such as regular electrical power cuts and a lack of drinking water, corruption in state departments, unemployment and living conditions in Iraq came to a head in July 2018 with the eruption of protests in the city of Basra in southern Iraq.
39. On 8 July 2018 in the early hours of the morning, hundreds of citizens from the Bahla area of Al-Midaina's northern district of Basra marched peacefully, protesting the lack of jobs, particularly in the oil industry, as well as water and electricity shortages, and the lack of other essential services. The demonstration continued until midday when security forces attempted to disperse protesters using live bullets, resulting in the death of **Asaad Al-Mansori** and the serious wounding of three other demonstrators. The head of the security committee in the Basra provincial council, Jabbar Al-Saadi, confirmed the start of an investigation but to date no charges have been filed.
40. By 24 July 2018, the Gulf Centre for Human Rights had reported at least thirteen deaths, 269 injuries and 757 detentions resulting from the use of disproportionate forces by the Iraqi authorities in response to the protests.¹⁴ In many cities across Iraq, the authorities used water cannons, tear gas and on several occasions live ammunition to disperse peaceful demonstrations.
41. On 20 July 2018, in Liberation Square in central Baghdad, a small group of demonstrators tried to move towards the Green Zone where the government headquarters are located. Riot police used water cannons and tear gas canisters, causing numerous head injuries to the group and other demonstrators.
42. On 23 July 2018, a group of unidentified men assassinated human rights lawyer **Jabbar Mohammed Al-Karm**. The killing took place near the Al-Hadi police station, shortly after Al Karm had left the Palace of Justice. The armed men, who were driving a Toyota Land Cruiser, intercepted his car and shot him fifteen times. Al-Karm had been defending many of the demonstrators detained in Basra since the protests began.
43. On 14 August 2018, security forces attacked protesters with batons and burned down a protest tent in Ezzedine Salim (formerly Al-Hawair). Three demonstrators were severely injured. Among the injured was human rights defender, **Harith Al-Salmi**, who was hospitalised for his wounds and died the next day. The medical report obtained by the Gulf Centre for Human Rights determined a fractured skull as cause of death.¹⁵

¹⁴ Gulf Centre for Human Rights, "Iraq: Protect the right to peaceful demonstration, release all detained demonstrators and reopen access to the Internet / Assassination of human rights lawyer Jabbar Mohammed Al-Karm in Basra", <https://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/1912>.

¹⁵ Gulf Centre for Human Rights, "Iraq: Peaceful protests continue after demonstrator killed in Basra",

44. On 3 September 2018, Security forces responded to a demonstration in the centre of the city of Basra using tear gas and bullets to disperse the crowd, resulting in the death of twenty-year-old demonstrator, **Yaser Makki**, who was killed after being directly hit by a bullet in the chest.
45. On 5 September 2018, another twenty-year-old protestor, **Mohammad Khadim**, who was a student in the translation department at the University of Basra, lost his life after a member of the security forces targeted him with a tear gas canister that exploded in his face.

IV. Recommendations

46. We call upon the member states of the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Iraqi government to:

- a) Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, in Iraq are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, and ensure full respect for the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- b) Conduct independent, impartial and thorough investigations into the killings of human rights defenders in Iraq, with the aim of publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
- c) Ensure that women human rights defenders in Iraq can freely carry out their work in an environment free from harassment, gender-based discrimination and violence. To this end, we call on the Government of Iraq to implement policies favouring gender equality, repeal discriminatory legislation such as the criminalisation of adultery under the 1969 Penal Code of Iraq and enact a law combatting domestic violence, in line with international standards;
- d) Amend the draft Cybercrime Law, in particular articles, 3, 4, 6, 18, 21, 23, which must be redrafted without restricting freedom of expression on the Internet, or other public freedoms of all Iraqi citizens, including human rights defenders who conduct their activities online;
- e) Ensure the security of journalists in conducting their work without being subjected to judicial harassment or imprisonment;
- f) Repeal the 2003 Provisional Order 19, adopted by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and renew its commitment to “bring national legislation in accordance with international standards to fully guarantee freedom of expression, association and assembly;”
- g) Conduct independent, impartial and thorough investigations into the use of excessive force by security forces in response to protests in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and in Iraq, with the aim of publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards; and
- h) Ensure full cooperation with the mandates of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and of Association and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

V. Contacts

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