**The National Union of Journalists Calls for the End of Impunity and Arbitrary Dismissals**

Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative – ICSSI

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The National Union of Journalists, an independent Iraqi trade union founded in 2013, issued its 2019 semi-annual report which recorded the most serious violations against journalists and media workers in Iraq.

The monitoring unit of the union, composed of 20 union members, recorded 40 violations in the first 6 months of this year. They were discovered throughout Iraq and in all kinds of areas, whether described as “safe", "conflict zone" or "unsafe". The violations took varying forms, including arbitrary arrest, detention, death threats and one murder. The defeat of Daesh and the call to restore security and stability in most Iraqi cities seems not to entail sufficient protection of journalists.

The fact that these cases continue is an indication that the dangers faced by journalists are not limited to those carried out by terrorist organizations, but may involve other local groups and individuals, such as armed political parties or those who take advantage of positions of power in the Iraqi government. All too often, the perpetrators of these crimes act with impunity: clearly those authorities tasked with enforcing the laws which ensure safety and justice for journalists are failing to do their jobs.

The documented violations also included cases of arbitrary dismissal, or dismissal based on false pretenses. The report stressed that most of the layoffs were explained using suspicious and dubious reasons, with employers citing ‘economic' or ‘financial’ crises when in fact companies were doing well.

"The lack of awareness of legal protections in place, and the lack of formal and documented contracts between journalists and media organizations have resulted in the unjust firing of dozens of journalists from their jobs," the monitoring unit report states. Many journalists were dismissed for expressing their views on the social media, which is protected speech.

The National Union of Journalists blamed the Iraqi Council of Representatives for not enacting legislation that guarantees the rights of journalists in Iraq. Their compliance with an inadequate law passed in 2011, "Protecting Journalists No. 21” is insufficient since this law does not effectively protect all the rights entitled to journalists, An amendment was put forward, but so far "it hasn’t been moved from the drawers of the council. There is concern that some political parties are deliberately keeping it from being brought to light.”

In response to the institutions that violated journalists’ rights, the National Journalists' Union has called on working journalists to spread a culture of legal accountability, pressuring employers who engage in arbitrary dismissals to pay the salaries to those who were unfairly released from work. In addition, journalists were encouraged to establish formal contracts with their respective institutions to protect their rights and avoid cases of arbitrary dismissal in the future.

The union's report called on the executive authorities to "end impunity for those who violate the rights of journalists”. It also instructs the security forces to stop abuses against journalists on the grounds that they did not obtain security approvals for filming in Baghdad — this abuse is a clear violation of the Iraqi constitution.

**For the full bi-annual report and for all violations,** [**click here**](http://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-semi-annual-report-from-MOVU-2019-Jumana-4.docx).