

The Worst Year Since the Fall of Saddam's Regime: 2012 Press Freedom in Iraq

Journalists Under Military Guardianship; Government Attempts to Control them

JFO Annual Report



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INTERNATIONAL
MEDIA SUPPORT



Photographers covering security events



Photographer banned from covering an area was shut down due security reasons



Photographer being searched by military in Baghdad

The Worst Since the Fall of Saddam's Regime 2012 Freedom of Journalism in Iraq

Journalists Under Military Guardianship; Government Attempts to Control them

Research and interviews were conducted by Ziad al-Ajili. JFO representative in Kurdistan Metro Center provided additional research.

The Iraqi government marked the year 2012 with strict procedures against Iraqi media, using its security forces to limit the work of journalists. A high percentage of international journalists who attempted to obtain visas to enter Iraq were unable to, and others were prevented from covering public protests which occurred in several Iraqi cities. Neither Iraqi nor foreign journalists were spared from being arrested or detained for various reasons. The Iraqi media paid the price for the nation's protracted political crisis, as journalists and other media workers were subject to threats, direct

and indirect assaults, and other mistreatment.

2012 was the first year following the American military withdrawal from Iraq, and a general decrease of the influence of the international community on Iraq's decision makers. Media organizations, NGO's and as political and cultural intellectuals suffered as a result. This tax paid for the political crisis has been being paid by the media since the first months of the year. Its protections have suffered, in part, because most political parties and public figures have failed in their commitment to refrain from politicizing the press in their power struggles, and to protect and defend press freedoms in accordance to the constitution. Individual cases give cause for great concern, but a number of different serious indicators regarding the restriction of freedom of independent journalism in the country

can also be seen. The JFO has documented attacks on media institutions and independent journalists, in addition to the harmful restrictions and actions aimed at field journalists.

Executive authorities and military forces still forcefully restrict journalists' movement, throughout Iraq. Almost any activity by a journalist or media team requires authorizations issued by military and security officials, irrespective to the subject material being covered.

According to many journalists and media experts, a contributing factor is the diminishing role of many international organizations that speak out when the government's responsibilities for protecting press freedoms fall below accepted international standards.

The Iraqi government's behavior toward journalists and other



Iraqi journalists protest and demand the release of the French Journalist Nadir Dandon

media staff between May 3, 2012 and May 3, 2013 demonstrates systematic efforts to block media workers from practicing their work in a free manor, limiting their movement, and subjecting them to intimidation. This hostile environment, in which media workers are often unable to approach the scene of an event or otherwise hindered in the field, negatively affects the integrity of press coverage; it becomes impossible to verify and report simple facts, unencumbered by governmental, political and religious/sectarian influences. Iraq's "Journalist Protection" Law, passed by parliament on August 9, 2011, does not meet international standards for ensuring freedom of expression. Earlier laws restricting press freedoms are also still in effect, including the 1969 Penal Code, which criminalizes defamation and other civil matters, and the 1968 Publication Law, which allows for the imprisonment of journalists for up to 7 years if convicted on charges of insulting the government.

According to a study that was conducted by the JFO and a group of legislative experts, the law's 19 articles include vague definitions, among them who is considered a journalist, and therefore protected by the law. Media workers, who are not technically journalists, but clearly are entitled to the same pro-

tections as journalists, are not mentioned, putting newsroom management, blog or internet news contributors, and those who are not traditional full-time employees are all omitted. This law also leaves the status of independent bloggers and activists in question.

The law seems to view journalists as little more than children who need to be supervised throughout the day, while allowing security and political officials free reign to control their work, according to their mood. This is very dangerous, as it restricts journalists' mobility and general ability to collect information. Articles of this law also do not protect journalists from prosecution under previous laws that allow for punishment of so-called "publishing crimes" and restrict freedom of press, reminiscent of the times of oppression, dictatorship, and tyranny of the previous regime, and the fact that laws from the time of this regime can be enforced simultaneously is of great concern. Such laws with provisions that could still be used to prosecute journalists are as follows; 1969 Penal Code (111) The 1968 Publication Law (206), the law of the dissolved Ministry of Information in 2001 (16), the 1973 law of censorship and movies (64) in 1973, and the 1969 amended Journalists Syndicate law (178). Their continuation furthers the tactics of the old regime

and significantly undermines freedom of press, as well as general freedom of speech.

This is why the JFO seeks to take all possible action to free Iraqi journalism from this heavy heritage of codes that are unacceptable, and no longer in line with the spirit of the era. Government efforts to limit the media, however, do not stop there.

The JFO publicized an official document it obtained last June, requesting that the Interior Ministry take action to suspend the activities of 44 media Iraqi and international media organizations, from TV stations to prominent local radio stations.

The Communications and Media Commission (CMC) of Iraq, which produced the document, has for years harassed journalists and media workers outside the framework of legality. The CMC is apparently not able to distinguish between the concepts of organizing the media and restricting it. Ambiguous regulations and the absence of the parliamentary oversight have led to unfair accusations of "violations" against media organizations regulations.

Instead of regulating transmission services, CMC undermined the efforts of freedom of expression. It intimidated media organizations and workers, especially those which faced threats of closure and huge fines, leading to a mounting fear of the political role the CMC is playing on behalf of governmental parties, instead of acting as an independent body. The CMC made decisions to close Baghdadia satellite channel in addition, it threatened to withdraw the license of the British station, BBC English.

On April 28, 2013, the CMC decided to suspend the licenses of 10 satellite channels for "adopting sectarian speech" in their coverage of a raid by security forces of a protest square in Hawieja which killed dozens. The CMC contended that the broadcasts by these channels is causing the Iraqi social fabric to be torn apart through incitement of violence, religious hatred, and the call to take part in "criminal retaliatory" activities. The CMC emphasized the necessity for the public to understand that freedom of speech is "not an absolute right".

The channels whose licenses were suspended were: Baghdad TV, Sharqiya, Sharqiya News, Babeliya, Salah Al-Din, Anwar 2, Tagheer, Fallujah, Al-Jazeera, and Gharbiya.

A CMC statement said, "the approach of these channels was closer to an approach of escalating the situation, misinforming, misguiding and exaggerating, than to one of objectivity, which threatens the nation's unity, and tears its social fabric," though it gave no examples, or articulated the exact "threat" to Iraq's "social fabric" that the coverage in question represented.

This year, though described by a number of Iraqi journalists as being the worst since the fall of Saddam, witnessed some positive developments. Attempts led by some MPs in parliament's Culture and Information Committee were successful in blocking passage of the Information Crimes, (or Cybercrimes) law, which would have imposed harsh criminal penalties for many kinds of regular internet use, if the government deemed websites visited or posted to were not acceptable, according to vague and poorly-worded provisions that allowed for broad interpretation. On February 5, 2013 members of the Committee revealed that, according to official correspondences that the JFO managed to get a copy of, the notorious draft law would be cancelled, with the approval of the office of the parliament speaker, justifying this decision by saying the draft law was outdated for the present security situation. The council requested the removal of the draft law from the parliament web site and its chairman, Ali Shlah told the JFO, "Such laws should not be legislated in this country, because it undermines the authority of democracy." Mr. Shlah, a member of Maliki's State of Law coalition, declared that his request to rescind the draft was delayed by the speaker's office for six months, and that "The approval to cancel it will give us more space to reinforce freedom of speech." The year also witnessed a notable uptick in what is known as "new media," through the appearance of a new generation of bloggers and those using social media, who were able to bring attention of the Iraqi public to social, political, and religious issues, the open discussion of which are often seen as unacceptable by various influential groups or individuals. Some indicators for freedom of press were qualitatively different this year, such as the declaration that was made by the military officials that they were not allowing journalists to enter into areas that have witnessed public protests.

On March 3, 2013, Lt. Gen. Mardhi al-Mahlawi Al-Dulaime, chief of Anbar Operations Command, said, in a statement, "We have received instructions from higher authorities not to allow any non-Iraqi journalists to enter Anbar province". In April, 2013, all journalists were prevented from traveling anywhere near the city of Haweeja, as indignant protesters were surrounded by security forces, who later, on April 23, raided the protest camp. Dozens were killed and wounded, all without media coverage. The Iraqi government and demonstrators have conflicting claims about who caused the bloodshed, and the complete absence of journalists has caused there to be no objective documentation of what really happened. With only competing accusations of involved parties to go on, violence in other provinces has flared. This is a particularly acute example of the importance of journalism, and what happens when it is not allowed to function. This report also includes violations occurring in provinces that are part of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), where journalists suffered from arbitrary detentions and prosecutions for criticizing the authorities of the region. Police and special security forces, known as Asayish, detained several journalists and destroyed their equipment after they published investigative reports uncovering administrative and financial corruption in the region. According to the Metro Center for the Defense of Journalists, which represents the JFO in the KRG, journalists are still charged using to the 1969 Iraqi Penal Code, despite the passage of a KRG press law in 2008. In a February 10, 2013 statement, Human Rights Watch said that the KRG "tolerated harassment and intimidation of journalists and other critics, including those seeking to expose official corruption and other wrongdoing, while permitting a climate of impunity for those carrying out the abuses against dissidents." The total violations recorded by the JFO for this year are 293, categorized as follows: 68 cases of arrest and detention, 95 cases



Correspondents in Iraq work under the pressure of threats

of journalists being prevented from performing their duties, 69 assaults, 7 armed attacks, 51 other violations, and 13 cases of closure. 2 journalist was killed. Also, the three week detention of French journalist Nadir Dandon, accused of espionage, was a shock to the local and international press. Overall, the security and legal environment for press work is still fragile and does not meet minimum standards of occupational safety, in a country that is still suffering the effects of violence and multiple divisions within its society. In this regard, it's worth mentioning what happened in the beginning of April 2013, when a mob of dozens of men carried out targeted attacks four Iraqi newspapers, leading to the brutal assault on staff members, which included several of them being either beaten, stabbed or thrown off a roof. The newspaper offices were also vandalized by the mob, with their contents being either smashed or set on fire. Though it's been more than a month since these brazen attacks, there have been no arrests, as parties who stood behind them were never publicly revealed. Nevertheless, the Interior Ministry confirmed it has in its possession, security camera footage that could help identify the attackers.



Killings

Over the last decade, Iraq has been at the top of the yearly "Impunity Index", published by the international press freedom group, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Those working in the media have been the target of successive attacks ever since the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. 261 Iraqi and foreign journalists were killed (one of them our colleague Ghazoan Anas), including 147 journalists who were killed as a direct result of their work, as well as 52 technicians and media assistants. The others were killed by various criminal acts not proven to be a result of their journalism work, but

many cases are suspicious. 64 journalists and media assistants were kidnaped, most of them killed, and 14 of them are still missing, according to the JFO's statistics. All these cases are unsolved; the criminals remain unknown. The past year has seen the murder of two journalists, in separate attacks. On July 30, 2012, program presenter in "Sama Al-Mosul" channel, Ghazoan Anas, was killed when an unknown armed group attacked his house in Mosul.

Riyadh Tawfeeq said that: "Four gunmen attacked his house in Sumer district, in southeast Mosul, shot him to death and

wounded his 4 month old child, mother and wife".

On November 18, 2012, Iraqi security forces found the body of journalist Sameer Al-sheikh Ali, who worked as an editor of the "Al-Jamaheer Al-Baghdadis" newspaper in Baghdad, being shot with a number of bullets.

One of the editors told the JFO that Sameer Al-Sheikh Ali was killed while he was driving in the Sheikh Omar district in central Baghdad, and said that Ali "Took three gun shots in his chest. He was immediately killed, and nobody was able to resuscitate him".

Closures and restrictions on media foundations

Iraqi authorities withdrew the permission for the BBC World Service to broadcast in June, 2012 last year. The English the broadcast was not allowed, the CMC claiming that there were not a sufficient number of frequencies available, but allowed the continuing broadcast of BBC's Arabic language programming.

On December 17, 2012 Baghdadia satellite channel was closed, as well as Al-Mahabba radio station, both in Baghdad. A large

number of security forces surrounded Baghdadia building and asked the employees to leave the building. Though equipment was taken, no assaults were reported. Another military force raided Al-Mahabba radio station's office in the Wuzeriya neighborhood, ordered them to shut off transmission, and then left. The CMC claimed that the radio station did not pay the required fees for registration.

Iraqi Police Given Orders to Shut Down Local and Foreign Media Agencies 44



Correspondents in Iraq work under the pressure of threats

In June, an official government document was obtained by the JFO, revealing that security forces in Iraq had received orders to shut down the offices of 44 media agencies. Included were prominent local TV channels and radio stations such as Sharqiya and Baghdadia satellite television stations and foreign-owned media such as BBC, Radio Sawa and Voice of America.

The document, obtained by the JFO, was issued by the CMC, signed by acting director Safa al-Din Rabiah, and was addressed to the Interior Ministry. It recommended banning 44 Iraqi and foreign media agencies from working in various areas in Iraq, including Kurdistan. The document states it had already been approved by the Deputy Interior Minister Adnan al-Assadi, described in the letter as having instructed the ministry's Department of Relations and Media "to stop media cooperation with these agencies and to notify the police to ban these channels, along with the necessity of informing the channels to contact the CMC."

In past decisions, the CMC has caused controversy for its heavy-handed regulations and tactics, seen by critics as conducting a program to undermine freedom of expression in Iraq by ordering arrests, fines and the closure of media organizations. Many media workers argue demonstrates a bias in favor of the current political administration.

The document was circulated among police forces in Baghdad on May 8, 2012, five days after International Press Freedom Day. In it, the CMC informs the Interior Ministry that it has suspended operating licenses, or has banned cameramen and other media workers from working, from television stations such as, Baghdadia, al-Diyar, Babeliya and Marbad. In the document, the CMC also states that additional TV channels and media agencies are currently not licensed and requested that the Interior Ministry take legal action taken against them.

The CMC has begun implementing a list of regulations, issued before the last election under the pretense of silencing media agencies that encourage sectarian violence. International media and human rights organizations have written that such regulations are undue restrictions to freedom of speech and



Nadir Dandon, French journalist spent three weeks in detention

of the press.

Prominent Baghdad journalist Sarmad al-Taei said, "The list of regulations clearly shows how restrictions are preemptive, vague and easily misused," and demanded "immediate talks between the Iraqi media and the CMC, to review the murky relationship between the CMC and the private media sector."

The list of regulations states that media agencies refrain from broadcasting "any content that encourages sectarianism or violence," without providing a clear guidelines or definitions. The list also states that all media agencies must be licensed by the CMC before beginning work in Iraq, but lacks sufficient information regarding the standards that the government uses

in order to hand out the licenses. The list also gives the authority to the CMC to shut down, suspend, fine and confiscate the equipment of media organizations due to even minor violations by the organization. The CMC has collected substantial fees from various media organizations, as high as 1,600,000,000 Iraqi Dinars(\$1.37 million USD).

Examples of Violations Against Journalists

On May 8, 2012, an Sumeria satellite channel team was beaten in Erbil by members of the Asayish, as the team was covering

a demonstration organized by dozens of people in front of the KRG parliament building, in protest of material that was published in a newspaper considered to be "offensive to Islam". Managing Director of Sumeria, Ammar Talal, informed the JFO that the security force had beaten the team and confiscated their equipment during covering the demonstration.

On July 6, 2012 three reporters of Al-Hurria satellite channel were assaulted by security forces. General director of the channel, Fayroz Hatem, stated to Aswat Al-Iraq newswire that the correspondents were assaulted and threatened by security forces without reason. Hatem also declared that members of "Al-Hurria satellite channel staff were assaulted in three provinces; Baghdad, Diwaniya(Qadisiya) and Diyala, by a variety of security forces. Our cameraman in Baghdad Samir Abd al-Majeed was assaulted by the security of the Ministry of Electricity, whereas our correspondent in Diwaniya, Mohammed Ismael, was beaten and threatened with death as he was covering explosions that occurred in the province, and was banned from entering hospitals". Hatem continued, "Our correspondent, Munjid Al-Khazraji, was beaten and detained in Diyala, despite having all required, legitimate and official security authorizations to practice his daily work.

On July 6, 2012, eleven journalists were assaulted by Interior Ministry forces in Erbil. Relations official at the Metro Center to Defend Press Freedom, Awat Ali, said that: "The center received complaints from 12 journalists, confirming an incident of assault by members of the ministry of Interior, banning them from covering a strike in Erbil Emergency Hospital".

On July 6, 2012, a police commander in Diyala, prevented staff of Al-Hurra satellite channel from performing normal press coverage. Hadi al-Anbaki, the channel's correspondent in Diyala, said that he was en route to the center of Baquba to cover the remnants of a detonated car bombed, two hours after the explosion, they were surprised by the presence of the commander and a very strong security presence. As the commander saw them, al-Anbaki said he demanded, "Pull out the tape, filming is forbidden". The security forces confiscated the tape, and banned the team from covering the event further.

Soldiers ban a
photographer
from working
without a
military permit



On September 1, 2012, the members of an intelligence brigade of the army detained and mistreated three journalists in the middle of Baghdad. Saffa'a Dhiab, an independent journalist, informed the JFO that he and his colleagues, Omar al-Jaffal and Saffa'a Khalaf were performing field work in a neighborhood with historical buildings when they were intercepted by members of the army's 11th Division. Immediately, they were handcuffed, blindfolded and harassed in a rough and unacceptable manner, after which, the soldiers confiscated all of their equipment, transferred them to their division headquarters, after which Khalaf was beaten and insulted.

On September 27, 2012, members of an armed group broke into Al-Fayha'a satellite channel's bureau in Mosul and threatened the staff with death if they did not cease doing their jobs as journalists. The gunmen are suspected to be from what the Islamic State of Iraq. Mohammed Al Ta'ai, manager of the channel, said the gunmen destroyed the contents of the building, damaged the broadcasting, communications and camera equipment, threatened to kill the staff if they continued to work at the station and left behind a statement signed by the "commander" of Mosul.

On October 9, 2012, prominent journalist for Baghdadia satellite channel Imad al-Abadi was framed with false charges of being a Ba'athist and a terrorist. A high-level security source in Thi Qar province revealed to the JFO that an interrogation officer in the province forced 3 detainees to falsely confess their affiliation with the banned Ba'ath Party in a supposed secret cell, headed by al-Abadi. Commenting his case, al-Abadi said, "This targeting comes from the minds of those who are with some security forces that still consider the media that covers the issues of services, electricity, and administrative corruption as a threat to the general system. They classify it as subversion, and sometimes terrorism".

On October 23, 2012, investigative journalist Shahad Dhia'a Mahdi, who works in for al-Ghad daily newspaper was stabbed in the abdomen with a knife in downtown Baghdad. The attack occurred just after she left Sa'adoun police station, where she was questioning police personnel for an investigative report

about more than 180 female detainees being held who had allegedly been arrested in brothels.

On November 11, 2012, Al-Rasheed satellite channel staff in Mosul was harassed and prevented from performing their work, when an intelligence brigade of the army's 2nd Division prevented correspondent Ahmed Abd al-Jabbar Mustafa and cameraman Alla'a Idwar Jamil from covering a local visit by the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, His Excellency, Ali al-Adeeb to the University of Mosul. Manager of Al-Rasheed in Mosul Ziyad Tariq al-Sanjari claimed that the team possessed all necessary badges, authorizations, and other paperwork required to enter the campus from the gate of the Collage of Science, including a formal invitation from university spokesman Thamer Mayouf to attend a cornerstone laying ceremony for the new university hospital that was attended by al-Adeeb.

On November 19, 2012, security forces prevented media teams of 8 satellite channels from covering a sit of the staff of an Interior Ministry facilities, physically assaulting some of them. The teams were from the following channels; Baghdadia, Sama al-Mosul, al-Turkumaniya, UAE Ain Agency, Mosul, Al-Rasheed, Baghdad TV, and even the state-run Iraqiya channel.

On November 23, 2012, Basil al-Qadri, a writer for the citizen's complaint column for Al-Zaman newspaper, was abducted by a group of soldiers thought to be from a military intelligence brigade. They broke into his house in the city of al-Khalis at midnight, handcuffed him and led him away to an unknown location. Neither his whereabouts nor the reasons for his detention were ever acknowledged by any security authority.

On November 24, the JFO demanded immediate intervention by the Prime Minister, Mr. Nouri al-Maliki, to reveal the questionable circumstances of the arrest and detention of journalist Sabah Hassan for more than ten months, and to clarify the reasons for her transfer to a detention facility in the city of Tikrit, despite the fact that she lives in Baghdad, and why she was subjected to brutal torture. During interrogation, at the Major Crimes Directorate located at the presidential palace compound in Tikrit, high ranking officers took part in ripping her

clothes off, exposing her nudity to policemen who repeatedly humiliated her, beat her, burned her body with cigarettes, and several other forms of torture. She would be transferred from the compound, one of Saddam's former palaces, to the police station downtown covered in just a blanket.

On November 25, 2012, Baghdad Operations Command prevented Baghdadia satellite channel from covering the religious ceremonies of Ashura in Khadhmiya. Checkpoint guards told the correspondents and cameramen that they had special instructions from Baghdad Operations Command to prevent any correspondent or cameraman from entering any area where Ashura ceremonies took place, saying, "What have you got to do with Kadhmiya?" The administration of Baghdadia News and Baghdadia channel in Baghdad showed the JFO letters they received from high ranked officials from Baghdad Operations Command, accusing them of loyalty to the previous regime, including such text as "You are the tails of Yazeid, Uday, and Saddam," and "We are so proud that the horns of Uday and Rana, and their followers are provoked by Baghdad Operations Command, and are barking again".

On November 30, members of a local police chief's security detail assaulted Al-Nasseria News Network correspondent Walid Kareem in the town of al-Rifai, in Thi Qar province, when he arrived to the scene of a violent confrontation after local townspeople stormed field offices of the Petronas oil company. Despite showing his press credentials and authorizations, he was attacked and beaten by the guards.

On December 1, 2012, the local government of Qadisiya province threatened its own media workers, and Governor Salim Hussein Alwan publicly threatened to pursue journalists who are dealing "unprofessionally" in their coverage of local issues, "especially those of service," as he puts it. Alwan frankly confessed that, "the Provincial Council continuously monitors the media, and sees any unprofessional behavior in the media as a prelude to the prosecution of any party which pursues political reporting, according to law." As an afterthought, he added, "We don't have Mafias of gangsters, we wouldn't use the same

methods that were used with media workers, because we deal with them according to a culture of legality". Local journalist Mohammed Ismail commented on Alwan's statements by saying, "Some officials treat journalists as if they were either armed soldiers or those whose job it is to improve their images", he also added "They forget about the constitution, the Journalist Protection Law, and the principles of freedom of speech, and freedom of information".

On December 2, 2012 the Najaf Provincial Council chairman Sheikh Fayad al-Shimmari had Dhia Hashim al-Ghuraifi, chief editor of the *Awraq Najafya* magazine, removed from the provincial council hall while attending an ordinary council session, among several other media workers. He said, "After the beginning of the session, the council chairman insulted me, then stopped the session and dismissed me from the meeting hall in a very non-civilized, non-professional manner. He threatened me in a suspicious way, and when I asked him about freedom of press, speech, and the right to information, His reply was that I was a follower of the mayor, and my writing didn't shed light on the council's achievements, that, with it, I only promote for one party, not the others."

On December 7, 2012, the director of the government-run Iraqi Media Network's bureaus Yacob Yousif Abdalla told the JFO, that Ihsan al-Shawka, their correspondent in Najaf, went as directed by the network administration to where a demonstration had been organized at the city's airport. After he obtained the necessary authorizations allowing him to travel and report across the city, security forces detained him, confiscated his camera and took him to an unknown destination. Yacob contended there was no legal justification for this act, as he was performing his everyday work, as he had for 2 years. This behavior of the security forces reveals an intention to intimidate press workers, preventing them, and thus the population from being informed.

On same day, a team from the Asia satellite channel was heading to downtown Baghdad to cover daily events. At the checkpoint run by the 2nd brigade, 1st regiment of the Federal Police in, a policeman said to the correspondent present, in a

threatening way, "You journalists - your work is very comfortable, while we suffer in the streets. I don't care for the authorization that you have from Baghdad Operations Command, or others. I'll stomp on the biggest head". The correspondent told the JFO, "I asked him to inform his superior officer, and he started to push me and beat me and pull me out of the vehicle, with the help of another policeman. I had to get away from them and make a phone call to Colonel Qassim Atta, who is responsible for granting permissions to media workers. He suggested I file a complaint against the checkpoint guards.

On December 11, 2012, members of a joint security force in Baghdad assaulted a press team of Sumeria satellite channel. Managing director Ammar Talal told the JFO that correspondent Omar Majeed and cameraman Mohammed Mashalla were planning to do some interviews with people for the 'Shaba wa Banat' program, when some of traffic police and civil defense personnel yelled obscenities at them and then violently beat them.

The JFO's representative in the KRG, the Metro Center for the Defense of Journalists, regularly and meticulously documents violations against journalists. The region has witnessed several kinds of attempts to restrict press freedoms, and freedom of speech using a verity of pretexts. Authorities practiced various means to obstruct press work in the KRG.

The past year was one of obstructing journalistic work in the KRG. Most of the violations recorded were of preventing journalists from working freely, confiscation and destruction of equipment, concealing information from journalists, lawsuits, intimidation and death threats.

Violations against journalists In KRG

• During the demonstrations, 17 cases of violations have been recorded among them tens of burnings, arrests, assault, hindrance, insults, confiscation of equipment and vehicles against 26 journalists and two channels. The perpetrators of such acts were members of the Asayish forces and some members of the public.

• Fakhir Hamawano, the editor in chief of Zagros Satellite channel told the Metro Center, "about 50 people came out from behind the ministry of justice to attack our office, they set fire to the dried grass around the parking lot hoping the fire would burn the cars as well as the office." He also added, "They did not succeed in their efforts because it was during working hours and our guards had seen it and extinguished the fire. Some of them were arrested by police because they could not escape."

• Rizgar Kochar, a reporter for the Kurdistan Satellite Channel and vice president of the Erbil office of the Journalist Syndicates of Kurdistan told the Metro Center, "While covering the demonstrations in front of the Parliament, I extended the microphone and the demonstrators grabbed the collar of my shirt and pulled me backward and they said that we were jews. A large number of demonstrators came to us and assaulted me and the camera person, they tore up my shirt." He also added, "We were detained by the demonstrator for 10 minutes, they let us go after I told them we were going to leave."

• Darbaz Salih, reporter at the Xandan website told the Metro Center, "On the 60 meters' street, while reporting on the demonstrations, a group from the security forces kicked and punched me, took my laptop and camera, and pushed me away with insults and kicking, I still have not gotten back my equipment." He had regained possession of his equipment after 10 days from the Erbil Asayish.

• Hemin Ranyayee, a reporter at Roobar website, told the Metro Center, "At the Shorish overpass, I managed to escape the grips of the demonstrators who assaulted and insulted me. They told me that I was a Jew. But while in front of the Second Branch [of the Kurdistan Democratic Party], a guard pointed his gun at me and warned me that if I moved, he would kill me. He did that in front of everyone."

• Affan Ahmed Aziz, reporter at Metrography in Erbil told the Metro Center, "In front of The Second Branch, without taking picture, I was attacked by the Zeravani armed forces and I was insulted."

• Aso Hameed, the head of the news room at the Speda TV,

told the Metro Center, "Our station's crew was assaulted by a Zeravani [guards] force on the 60 meters street." They were detained for an hour.

- Nabaz Shwani, a reporter at the Sahar Satellite Channel told the Metro Center, "While reporting on the events of Erbil in front of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, I was in the company of Ibrahim Adnan, a cameraperson at NRT, we approached one of the officers of Zeravani force to seek permission to film, his first response was cursing and then insults and assaults, another 15 of them congregated and started assaulting us using the stock of their guns."

He also Added, "After they assaulted us, they took us in a military vehicle to a place behind the Erbil International Airport and they let us go each in a different direction away from a main road. One of my fingers was broken and another two sustained damage." Ibrahim Adnan who remained unconscious for a couple of hours after he was assaulted by the Zeravani forces, according to medical reports from the Emergency room at the Erbil hospital, he was badly hurt and remained in critical condition. He later said, "When we were attacked, we could not protect our equipment. The doctors say that I have to remain under medical care."

- Farman Mohammad, a reporter at NRT, told the Metro Center, "Once we received news that Ibrahim Adnan is in hospital, I went to visit him, but the Zeravani at the hospital insulted me and told me that I intended to film him while he was injured. This all happened while the life of our cameraperson was in danger."

- Yossif Mandalawi, a reporter at the Sormaria Satellite Channel, told Metro, "Our crew of three people was stopped by a group of people in plain clothes on the 60 meters street in Erbil, they were taken out of the vehicle, and were kicked and punched, their equipment confiscated along with their mobile phones, and eventually they were detained. But after much begging, they let them go but not their vehicle." He continued, "After a few days the vehicle and the equipment were returned from the Directorate of Police in Erbil."

- Twana Osman, the general director of NRT told the Metro

Center, "An unknown source broadcast a frequency to disrupt our broadcast. Our broadcast was off the air for one hour."

- Hangaw Hashim, a reporter at the Sbeiy website in Erbil, told the Metro Center, "On the 60 meters street, while on my way to report on an incident, a group of security forces in plain clothes with hand guns stopped me and asked me for my journalistic identification. After I showed them the ID, they took away my camera and sent me to their commander several times and checked all 400 photos on my camera, they insulted me, and after holding me up for 20 minutes, they let me go."

- Hawkar Abdulrahman, a reporter at the Kurdsat Satellite Channel told the Metro Center, "On the 60 meters street I was reporting on the incident of liquor stores, more than five personnel of the security forces armed with clubs attacked me and our cameraperson, Wishiar Kakil; they wanted to remove us from the area. After hitting us, they pursued us for five minutes running to catch us, but our driver came to our rescue."

- Safin Hameed, a photographer at AFP told the Metro Center, "While I was taking pictures of demonstrators in front of the Parliament, one demonstrator approached me angrily and told me that I took pictures of him. To ensure him that I did not take picture of him, I showed him all the photos in my camera. After he realized there was no photo of him, he said loudly 'what are you doing here?'" Safeen added, "After the man shouted at me, two other demonstrators came, the first man told them that I was a Jew and asked them to hit me. They tried to take my camera and break it. But the Civil Activities Police have helped rescue me and moved me to the premise of the parliament."

- Paraw Wahab, the head of Erbil office for Kirkuk Satellite Channel, told the Metro Center, "While I was reporting on the demonstrations, the security forces stopped me and took away my camera."

- Both Khalid Mohammad and Abbas Akram, from the Gali Kurdistan Channel told the Metro Center that while reporting, the security forces have stopped them and later chased them away.

- Shakhawan Sharif from NRT in Erbil told the Metro Center that while he was filming, the security forces harassed him and

chased him away from the area.

- Hedi Hawleri, a reporter from the Islamic Movements radio station, told the Metro Center, "While I was reporting on the incidents, the security forces stopped me and removed me from the area."

- On May 10, a court in Kifri sentenced a writer from Zang weekly to one month in prison, in addition to fining the writer and the editor in chief of the weekly. Saman Karim, the editor in chief of the Zang told the Metro Center, "The court sentenced Zaniar Hamagharib to one month in prison for publishing an article in the weekly on July 6, 2009." Karim added, "Hamagharib was sentenced to one month in prison and a fine of 225 thousand dinars, and I was also fined one million Iraqi dinars in the same case." He also explained, "The case was related to writing and

we tried hard to get him tried based on the journalism law, but he was sentenced on the Iraqi criminal code and myself according to the journalism law." Karim explained the reason for Hamagharib's sentence based on the Iraqi Criminal code as "Even though he has columns in many publications, he was not a member of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate."

- Barham Eizadeen, a managing editor of the Chirpa Magazine told the Metro Center, "Since May 7, Hemin Ari, the editor in chief of the Chirpa has been in detention due to a lawsuit filed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Public Attorney's Office." He also added, "We tried tirelessly to get him out on bail, but the complaints were filed under Iraqi Criminal Code."

- Nasih Khalid, the director of a local Yakgirto Station in Erbil told the Metro Center, "On May 9, Najat Khdir, the head of production at the station, was arrested on his way home by a group of people in a vehicle." He also added, "He had taken pictures during the May 8 demonstrations in Erbil and the security forces in plain clothes had threatened him"

- On May 30th, the Metro Center asked the Minister of Natural Resources to issue an apology for the disrespect directed to a member of the editorial board of the Lvin Magazine. Ashti Hawrami, the minister, had previously disrespected the board member in a telephone conversation (The Metro Center has

a copy of the audio record]. The mister had told the member, "You publish lies, it is not my job to correct them. I talk to those who know what they do and listen, not to those who state mumbo-jumbo analysis. This is absurd really... who is this worthless expert you brought and said such a thing?" The Metro Center announced to the public that this recording is one among many others of party and government officials responded to the journalists. The Metro Center asked the prime minister to respond to such words.

The month of June

- Mahmood Nuri Qadir, a reporter at Barin newspaper in the town of Saidaadiq, told the Metro Center that while reporting on a news on June 8 in the cemetery of the town "police and security forces have stopped" him and "threatened" him and took his equipment.
- On June 12th, the Metro Center announced that "The Kurdistan Parliament clearly violates the journalists' rights and stops them from filming the session, and it even banned cameras from the press room where journalists view the session via a screen." Tariq Sarmami, a media advisor to the speaker of the parliament told reporters that "only those footages that are prepared by the media office of the parliament will be published, since the entire session could not be aired live as it would affect the progress of the session. If reporters want to remain in the press room, they ought not have any cameras."
- Early June, the Center stated that the ministry of Interior was careless in connection with the disappearance of a journalist Mawlood Afand, the editor in chief of Israel-Kurd Magazine, a Kurdish citizen of Iran, traveled with a friend from Erbil to Suleimany, and later went different ways. His phone would switch off thereafter until it turns on again the following morning to tell his colleague "the battery died, I will call later and tell you where I was and what had happened. But I am safe." After this call, the phone goes off again. According to Sherzad Omer, public relations officers at Israel Kurd "on the 12th, the phone was turned on again, I tried to call it, no answer."

Another friend of Afand who asked to remain unnamed told AwenaNews "A female voice answered my call by saying 'yes' in Farsi, and the connected was lost." On the third day of the disappearance of Afand, the former head of the organization, Dawued Baghstani who resides in Turkey issued a statement declaring the disappearance of Afand.

- On June 25, Bahez Akrayee, a reporter from NRT, was doing a story in front of the hospital in Akre when a group of police tried to take his camera away. They scratched his hands while trying to force it out of his grip.

The month of July

First of July violations in the city of Erbil:

- In the morning of June 1, while reporters were covering the walk out of the physicians at the emergency hospital of western Erbil, a group of Zeravani guards attacked the crew from the Gali Kurdistan, NRT, KNN, the Kurdsat, the Speda, and the Payam. Reporters were forced to go away from the location.
- Hawkar Mohammad, a reporter at the Payam Channel told the Metro Center, "While covering the walk out of the physicians, the hospital guards have prevented us from filming, they tried at first to push me away from the area with threats, cursing, and insults. But they did not stop there, and 10 to 15 of them assaulted our crew." He also added, "The Zeravani have kicked me and slapped me on the face, they broke our camera and hit the cameraperson, Niaz Mahmood, with the camera parts on his face and wounded him. We were later taken to the hospital for treatment."
- Haryad Karim Ismail, a reporter from the Gali Kurdistan Satellite Channel, was beaten by the Zeravani forces by kicking and a hand held metal device, he told the Metro Center, "About 15 of the Zeravani came to us and started hitting us, one of them turned around and hit me hard with the handheld metal device, and he hurt my neck." He added, "They did not stop at that but also attacked Yossif Mustafa, our cameraperson, and took away his camera by force. After that, the police arrived at the scene. The Major among the Zeravani got there, and man-

aged to give us back the camera. And then we were all moved inside the hospital for treatment."

- Hawkar Abdulrahman, a reporter from the Kurdsat Satellite Channel along with Hemin Mohammad, a cameraperson, said the Zeravani forces have stopped them and insulted them. He added, "Two of them were in plain clothes, and the rest were Zeravani, they tried to stop us from reporting during the demonstrations, they warned us and told us that if we were to advance, they would hit us bad, that is why they pushed us and other reporters away."

- Barzan Hassan, a reporter from NRT, and Husam Hamdi, a cameraperson, were beaten and insulted by Zeravani forces. Hassan told the Metro Center, "The guards at the hospital stopped us from reporting on the incident.

They told us that they had orders to prevent us from filming. They pushed me back and dismounted the camera to stop us from filming. They put pressure on us and beat us. There were about six of them." He also added, "Even though we mentioned the journalism law and our rights to report on the incident, they cursed the government and the parliament, and told us that none of these would count, only the order they received count."

- Alwand Hameed, a reporter at the Speda Satellite Channel, along with crew members from the Payam Channel and the Gali Kurdistan have all filed complaints at the Ashti Police station in Erbil against the commander of the Zeravani forces and members who have attacked them at an emergency hospital of in western Erbil. He told the Metro Center, "At 9:30am, we started entering the hospital, and the guards prevented us from entering with the pretext that we did not have permission from the Ministry of Health, they then started to curse and insult us. They also prevented us from filming even from outside." Hameed added, "The Zeravani came outside and said if we were to film they would destroy our cameras. About six of them came towards me and the cameraperson Sayaf Ahmed and beat us. When they charged, he escaped to the street. Then we informed the police and they came to our rescue. Then we were allowed to work and the wounded reporters

were taken inside the hospital for treatment," the reporter from Speda told the Metro Center.

- Mufeed Faisal, a cameraperson from KNN, and Nabard Hus-sain, a reporter, were prevented from reporting. Faisal told the Metro Center, "While I was reporting, two to three guards came over the iron fence, walked towards me and pushed me away. They insulted both of us and beat the other reporters in front of our eyes."

- Berivan Mohammad Qadir, a reporter from the Chatirpress website told the Metro Center, "The night of Friday 7th of July, at 9 pm, I received a message from an unknown account on facebook threatening me not to mention the name of a certain party in my report which investigates the case of the disappearance of a journalist Mawlood Afand."

- Jwanro Mohammad, a reporter from the Sbeyi website and the Goran Radio told the Metro Center that he was informed of an activity at the LG company in Suleimany. He said, "We waited for an hour, then the actor showed up, while we were filming, the police and body guards of the actor have pushed us away and insulted us, and again while removing the cover from the machine, they repeated the same thing." Related to the same situation, Ziryan Mohammad, a reporter at Awena website told the Metro Center, "I went to the Kurdistan Mall in Suleimany to report on the visit of a Korean actor to the LG company, while I was gathering information the police and the guards stopped me and pushed me back and insulted me." Ardalan Mahmood also told the Metro Center, "While reporting on a visit of a delegation to Kurdistan Mall, police stopped me and insulted me."

- The Metro Center rejected the investigation report from the Ministry of Interior about the violations on July 1 conducted by the Zeravani guards in Erbil, which targeted against 12 reporters from six different crews. The Metro Center wrote, "Forming a committee to investigate the incident by the Ministry of Interior is a step forward, but the results of the investigation was ten steps backward. We reject the findings of the report and we consider it another violation against the journalists rights." The Metro Center also mentioned that "footage and photos clearly

indicate that the Zeravani forces, like the forces of dictatorial authorities, had treated journalists, wounded them and confiscated their cameras." The Ministry of Interior report states "media outlets learn about the walkout and come to the gate of the hospital to cover the strike, but the director of the hospital, Dr. Saman informed the reception and the Zeravani forces to prevent them (the journalists) from reporting the strike until they got permission from the media office at the Ministry of Health." The Metro Center stated that "in this part of the report, the Ministry of Interior implicates itself because its forces have stopped reporters from reporting on the strike, and because hospitals are public places, therefore preventing journalists from reporting at such places is a violation of the journalism law."

The Metro Center also mentioned that "what is surprising is that the Journalists Syndicate acts like the public relations office at the Ministry of Interior sending the report to media outlets without taking any stand on journalists who were violated, instead it accuses the journalists."

- On July 23, Amanj Ismail, a reporter from KNN in the town of Chwarqurna in Suleimany Province, told the Metro Center, "On Monday the 23, while covering the strike of the employees of the town hall, police prevented me from covering the event."

- On the 24, the Metro Center denounced the threats from Mahmood Sangawi, a Polite Bureau member of PUK, and pleaded with the Attorney General in Garmian to take action and ask PUK to issue a statement. Kawa Garmiani, the editor in chief of the Garyan Magazine, told the Metro Center, "A member of the polite bureau has called me early evening on Tuesday, threatened me and insulted me due to an article that has not yet been published except for the cover as an announcement." Garmiani added, "I will send the audio recording to the Metro Center and hope that the center hires a lawyer for me." According to the audio recording, Sangawi curses and threatens the journalist. He says in the audio, "Is the Garian your magazine...who has published that photo of mine, have you gotten permission to publish it?" The journalist responds, "The article is about you." Then Sangawi says, "I am coming to Garmian

now, if you publish the magazine, I will put your head back into the grave of, I will put your head into... of the one who told you to do this." The Metro Center announced that "we condemn such threats and profanity from that official who does not correspond to any civil interactions of a public figure." And the Metro Center also asks "the attorney general of Garmian to move the lawsuit against the official; for PUK to issue a statement about this

uncivilized behavior from its polit bureau member." The Metro Center supports the lawsuit of the journalist and will facilitate an attorney for him via the Metro Center to legally protect journalists. Mr. Sangawi in a later recording states that "the person who published my photo is not a journalist and the publication does not have a permit."

He calls the journalist "a kid". He also states, "My opponents and the enemies of PUK, those who collaborate with terrorists and murderers behind the curtain, to assassinate us [figuratively speaking, translator] and assassinate the cadres of PUK. Those might be behind Kawa Garmiani to push him to write bad things about our officials." The Metro Center supports no slander of any sort towards any citizen of this country. The Metro Center believes that Mr. Sangawi is in no position to determine who is or is not a journalist; especially Garmiani is an active member of the Journalist Syndicate. We consider labeling Garmiani as a "kid" and accusing him of "collaborating with terrorists" wrong, therefore we reject such action.

The month of August

- According to a number of journalists in the city of Erbil, the Kurdish media outlets and their reporters were not given information about the meeting held on August between the Turkish Foreign Minister with the President of Kurdistan region first, while the Turkish journalists were allowed to cover the event. Hemin Mamand, a reporter from the Awenanews website, told the Metro Center that the Public Relations Office at the prime minister's officer had informed journalists to be at the Erbil international airport. The Turkish journalists were informed by the Turkish consulate. Mamand said, "At the arrival of the Turkish Foreign Minister, we were allowed to film, but then we were

taken to the guest house at the Prime Minister's residence. We were also allowed to film there. However, from 3:30 pm until 9:30 pm, we were kept there waiting, without letting the Kurdish media to cover the visit, getting information or asking questions. While the Turkish journalists were shown respect and let inside the meeting."

- On August 16, while a group of people gathered in front of the Martyrs' Agency for not having received payments, a cadre from PUK prevented a KNN's crew from covering the event and threatened them. Yassin Salih, a cameraperson from KNN, a resident of Kalar where the said office is located, told the Metro Center, "On Thursday the 16th, at 10 am, I received threats from a cadre of PUK in front of the Martyrs' Agency."

- On August 26, while people were demonstrating against the Turkish army's bombardment of the Qandil area, journalists were being prevented from covering the event. Reporters from NRT, KNN, Gali Kurdistan told the Metro Center that the security forces had prevented them from covering the story, and that they stayed in the area from 10 am to 1 pm with no official in the area giving them a statement.

- On August 27, in the Emergency Hospital in Suleimany, an NRT crew was prevented from reporting. The crew told the Metro Center that they went to cover the news of a citizen who was injured, but they were prevented from their coverage, their camera was smashed, and they were insulted. The NRT reporter said, "We were attacked by the Asayish as well as the relatives of the injured who were also mostly from the Asayish."

The month of September

- On September 11, a Gali Kurdistan reporter, told the Metro Center that while he was with the health department's team to report on a violation of health codes at a restaurant, two workers and a manager at the restaurant smashed his equipment and prevented him from reporting on the story.

- On September 13, Zimnako Khalid, a reporter from the Sbeiy website, told the Metro Center, "At 4 pm in the afternoon on 11, I received a threat call from the family of the child who lost an eye in a game enacting one of the popular Korean dramas. I was planning to do a report on the incident. I have the voice

recording of the conversation."

- On September 23, Aram Rashid, the editor in chief of the Honya magazine, told the Metro Center, "Yesterday I received a death threat by phone for the photos of Masud and Mustafa Barzani's photos we had published in the magazine. I have the voice recorded."

- On September 23, Amanj Osman, a reporter from KNN in Rania, told the Metro Center, "This morning I went to cover the demonstration of the workers of an oil company at Qaratapa, near Rania, but the guards have prevented me from reporting on the event."

- On September 25, Bakhtiar Kaka, a reporter from KNN in Kalar, told the Metro Center, "Yesterday, while I was filming the demonstrations at the hospital in Kalar, the hospital police took away my equipment, detained me and prevented me from reporting."

- On September 25, Ja'afar Salih, a reporter from the Malband and KNN, told the Metro Center, "On the morning of the 23, I went to report on the demonstration of the people of the Qaratoghan village on the main road between Suleimany and Arbat, the civil activities police beat me with their tazer clubs and prevented me from reporting."

- On September 26, Saman Sheikh Baba, the head of Honya magazine office in Erbil, told the Metro Center, "On Saturday, the 22nd, I received a phone call from someone named 'Ahmed' who threatened to kill me as we do not have the right to publish the photos of the Barzanis and the Badinis."

- Zimnako Ismail, a reporter from the Sbeiy website, told the Metro Center, "On Monday the 24th, I went to report of the meeting between Talabani and Mustafa, but the guards at Talabani's residence insulted me and did not let me get any information."

- Hiwa Dartash, a reporter at Badinansat, told the Metro Center, "On the 29th, along with a cameraperson, Mahir Majeed, we went to the Domiz Syrian Refugee camp to gather information. The Asayish were guarding the camp.

They detained us for over two hours, and deleted everything that we have recorded." Dartash also added that initially the

Asayish allowed them to interview people but later said the opposite. He said, "Seven members of the Asayish forces took us to their post and told us that if we did not go willingly, they would drag us on our backs."

Dartash explained how the Asayish tried to take the camera away, and how he had managed earlier to take the tape out and sent it along back to the station.

When the Asayish learned about it, they forced the crew to return the tape otherwise they would not let them go. The tape was returned, the Asayish deleted the interview with the refugees at the camp who complained about the aid they were receiving. Then the crew was released later in the evening.

The month of October

- On October 8, during demonstrations conducted by the families of the victims of the internal conflict in front of the Parliament, an NRT crew was prevented from entering the building to report on the session. Farman Mohammad, a reporter from NRT, told the Metro Center, "The police had stopped us from entering the building for over half an hour, during the time I called the media office inside the Parliament to come and bring us in, after they arrived and we finally got in, the session was already over."

- On October 10, Shawqi Kanabi, the head of the Erbil office of KNN, was arraigned according to article 433 of the Iraqi Criminal Code and was released on a one million Iraqi dinars bail. Kanabi told the Metro Center, "It was because of a story that ran in the station about Ay Na company, the owner of which is a member of the Erbil city council, the story was about the company's failure to pay the workers at the Rapareen hospital and the Children's hospital. The head of the company sued me for defamation and the case was not filed under the journalism law."

- On October 7, Karzan Karim was sentenced to two years in prison according to article 1 and 2 of the Law 21 of the year 2007, on charges of leaking information from his agency and five articles he wrote on the "corruption of the Erbil Airport". Karim was arrested by the Asayish in Erbil on November 5, 2011, and was relocated to an unknown location [in a kidnab

like situation]. Three months after his disappearance, his family learned about his whereabouts.

- Adel Mariwani, a reporter at KNN Sharazoor, told Metro "while covering a demonstration in the town of Warmawa on the 4th of October, we were attacked and our camera was taken, later the police returned the camera. Then the Asayish tried to take the camera back from the police. The case resulted in shots being fired." Mariwani also added that he had filed charges against the person who took the camera.

- Himdad Qadir, a reporter from KNN in Choman, told the Metro Center, "On October 7, we were stopped at the Kojar check point and prevented from covering the inauguration of a monument that was built for the Martyr of Kurtak We were more than 10 journalists, and the Asayish at the check point stopped us."

The month of November

- On November 11, Shorish Dosky, a cameraperson from NRT, was threatened and prevented from reporting on a story at the refugee camp in Domiz.

- Media Darsim told the Metro Center, "On November 15, on our way to Qasre to cover a rally of the town's people in support of the Kurds in the north, the Asayish at the check point prevented us from going forward." Also Himdad Qadri, a reporter from KNN in Choman, told the Metro Center, "Along with reporters from Hawlati and Xandan, we went to cover the rally of the town's people in support of the Kurds in the north, the Asayish forces have prevented us from advancing without any legitimate reason, they asked us to leave the area and not to film"

- On November 18, Bashdar MohammadAmin, a reporter at Speda, told the Metro Center, "I received several threats via text messages." Some of the text messages read: "You are Bashdar Baziani, the reporter from Speda, I want you to know that we are watching you very closely. A report of yours was just broadcasted and in that report you insulted Kak Nejir [reference to the Prime Minister], I swear by the graves of the Martyrs and Barzani that I will kill you like killing a dog."

"I swear by Idris Barzani's grave that I will kill you, you son of a donkey."

"Just so you know that I am serious and that I will kill you, I am watching you closely, and you were just now in Suleimany in downtown wearing a red vest and a black t-shirt."

"Your life has little left."

"We have let go for a long time, but this time even God cannot save you."

"You are going to Speda, I know where you are, if you tell this to the police, I swear I will kill you."

- Falakadeen Kakayee, a writer and former Minister of Culture, told the Metro Center that he received a letter containing a bullet and a death threat. Kakayee thinks that the reason behind the threat is that the ministry of education had asked him to review the book "Religious Studies" and presented his views. He added, "I reviewed the book, and added a chapter for the Kakayees and Yarsans so that the coming generation know about those religion." 'Religious Studies' is a book prepared by the UNESCO as one of the required text books for schools.

- On November 28, Colonel Abdulkhaliq Tal'at, Erbil chief of police stated in an interview with Xandan that "if journalists crossed the lines, they would be beaten." He also said, "We make sure journalists do not know everything."

The Metro Center announced Mr. Tal'at as the primary suspect of attacking journalists in the city of Erbil. "According to our surveys for this year, tens of journalists were attacked by police in the city of Erbil while reporting on stories." The Metro Center is asking the Attorney General to investigate the statements from the chief of police.



The month of December

- On December 6, during a match between Erbil and Suleimany handball teams at the stadium of the school activities of the education department in Dohuk, Karzan Kanabi, a reporter at the Gulan magazine and Rudaw radio, was attacked by the Suleimany team. They punched and kicked him, and caused damage to his camera, which is worth \$3,000." Kanabi told the Metro Center, "During the match, about four or five players from the Suleimany team attacked the referee. I was filming at that time, the same players who attacked the referee, attacked me too asking why I was filming them."

«. Police arrives 30 minutes after the incident but according to Kanabi, the players managed to leave the scene and police could not arrest them. The officials at the education department promised to discipline those students, otherwise Kanabi will file charges.