



## Monthly report: January 2021

### Annual 2020 reports released in January 2021:

Metro Centre for Journalists' Rights and Advocacy released its [annual report](#) for 2020. According to the report:

There were 385 violations against 291 journalists in Kurdistan Region.

The report shows that 74 journalists were detained or arrested without a court order.

And there were eight cases of harassment against female journalists.

On 7 January 2021, the Kurdistan Journalists' Syndicate also released its [annual report](#) for 2020, showing:

More than 138 press freedom violations in the Kurdistan Region included abuses against 47 media outlets and 315 journalists.

The report also revealed there were 47 cases of preventing coverage involving 104 journalists.

Thirty-two cases of harassment and threats involving 88 journalists.

Eight incidents in which 15 journalists were assaulted.

Peace and Freedom Organization's annual report for 2020 suggests human rights violations in Kurdistan increased by 133% in 2020 compared to 2019, from 87 to 207 cases. The violations include: preventing protests, detention of journalists and activists, closing media and killing protesters.

A [survey](#) by International Republican Institute conducted in September 2020 showed that 83% of the Kurdistan Region respondents believe freedom of speech does not exist in Kurdistan while only 11% believe it 'somehow' exists.

In the first two months and last three months of 2020: 34,000 people from Kurdistan Region have migrated to Europe through the illegal and often dangerous smuggling routes according to [Lutka organisation](#) for migrant and refugee affairs. People didn't migrate from March to October due to coronavirus-related curfew in Kurdistan and lockdown Turkey. In 2019, 53,240 people migrated.

### January 2021:

6 January: Two parliament's guards attacked Esta Media Network reporter Ayub Ali as he was getting a statement from a lawmaker inside the Kurdistan parliament in the capital Erbil. Esta Media Network, which is based in Sulimani and believed to be affiliated with PUK co-leader Befel Talabani, [reported](#) one of the guards threatened the reporter, saying "I will kick you out".

7 January: Mazin Jamila, who is a student of medical school and owns a newly opened restaurant specialised in Ketogenic diet, was released after being detained for two weeks. KDP Asayish accused Jamila of being close to PKK, proving his detention is politically-motivated. He was acquitted of all charges including possessing an unlicensed gun and membership of the PKK.

7 January: A study by Its Time Iraq Organization shows 57% of girls between the ages of 14-19 in Kurdistan Region are circumcised.

8 January: Four men, reportedly from security forces, opened fire at Samal restaurant in Erbil around 2:30 in the morning. Local media reported the incident occurred after the restaurant staff told the men they were out of food Sarupe, a traditional dish made out of sheepskin filled with spiced rice. Erbil security forces (Asayish) sources said the four suspects arrested, a day after the incident.

15 January: There were 50 confirmed arrests of Kurdish refugees of Makhmour camp who have fled Turkey within two months in Erbil. Some of the arrestees are in the wanted list in Turkey for suspected ties to PKK. Two of the arrestees mysteriously died in Erbil jails. One of them was Metin Adugit from Van province of Turkey. According to his death certificate, Metin Adugit died on 10 November 2020, and the KRG authorities claimed he had a 'heart stroke'. However, his family was informed two months later. Adugit was co-chair of Kurdish BDP party in a district of Van in Turkey, but in 2015 he left after being investigated following the collapse of peace talks. Adugit, 45, was behind bars for more than 70 days in Erbil.

18 January: A police claimed he was hit by a car while on duty, and he has lost both his legs, but the driver who is the son of a senior KDP official in Erbil hasn't been arrested. He says it has been eight months, but his lawyer has told him the driver's father is too powerful so he can't be arrested.

18 January: Imprisoned journalist Sherwan Sherwani's father passed away. The health of Ameen Sherwani deteriorated following his son's imprisonment on 7 October 2020.

19 January: Hawre Kurdi, a civil society activist, was violently assaulted by three gunmen in Erbil at night. Kurdi is 28 and leads an NGO. He said he had been threatened multiple times before for criticising the ruling KDP on social media.

21 January: The KRG decides to delay payment of public servants' salaries of November and December indefinitely. The KRG only paid wages of January, February, March, September and October of 2020 with a 20% cut of the five months. Overall, it has paid 33% of employee's annual salary.

26 January: Head of Gorran faction in Kurdistan parliament Gulistan Saeed revealed that since August 2020 more than 70 journalists and opposition activists have been arrested in Duhok province for criticising corruption and organise demonstrations. She said if the protesters and activists threaten national security, the authorities should prove that to lawmakers and reveal evidence to public opinion.

26 January: A Security guard in front of Shorsh Hospital in Sulaimani attacked BMC TV reporter live on TV.

27 January: Yunis Soran was hit by a speedy car and died on the site, and the driver fled; his family knew about his death 24 hours later. The driver who hit him is the son of a famous businessman tied to senior leaders of ruling KDP and hasn't yet been arrested. KDP leaders have called Yunis's family to solve the issue through tribal, non-formal channels (money for blood) but the family has refused. Yunis Soran's family are also lower-ranking members of KDP.

27 January: Qaraman Shukri, an opposition activist, was detained in Sheladze district in Duhok province. Qaraman's father was a report with then-opposition KNN TV but died in suspicious circumstances in a nearby village in 2016. Pro-Government media claims he was detained for ties to PKK.

27 January: Two brothers shot dead in the Ainkawa neighbourhood in the capital city of Erbil. Erbil Police Spokesperson Hogir Aziz told NRT that the victims were getting into their vehicle when two unidentified gunmen opened fire on them. "We understand from our preliminary investigations that the incident was motivated by an enmity issue," Aziz said.

## Plight of Yazidis continues

8 January: The Yazidi woman who drowned in the Aegean Sea in her way to Germany was found after ten days. Khatoon Murad, a 26-year-old Yazidi woman, drowned in the Aegean Sea on 29 December 2020 while on route to Europe through a smuggling boat. Murad lived with her family in an IDP camp in Duhok and hoped for a better life in Germany.

18 January: Eleven Yazidis committed suicide in the Qadia, Sharya and Esysan camps for displaced Yazidis in Duhok province in the three weeks since the start of 2021. Background: The majority of them settled different IDP camps where there is no school, leaving many young people in limbo. Residents with too many hours to fill and a lack of psychosocial support are left largely unaided with their trauma, and little sense things will get better.

19 January: At least nine tents in Bajed Kandala Camp of displaced Yazidis in west Duhok province burned down.

22 January: Another fire in the Chamshko camp of displaced Yazidis in Duhok province burned down 13 tents to the ground as thousands of Yazidis who have been displaced since 2014 remain in a dire situation. Some 20 thousand Yazidi families are estimated to have remained in camps.





### **What is Kurdistan Watch?**

We are a watchdog group that monitor human rights and freedom of expression in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. We aim to cover all types of rights violations including human rights, violence against women, violence and detention of journalists, arbitrary arrest of activists and political opponents, minorities. We even consider not getting paid in time is a rights violation; hence we cover the salary issue in Kurdistan Region in our reports.

### **Why we do monthly reports?**

We aim to give a snap overview of all Kurdistan Region incidents in a compacted monthly report for foreign audiences interested in Kurdistan Region. Still, We don't have proper access to the region. Our reports only cover verified and confirmed incidents. Our upcoming reports may gradually become more extensive. We aim to give updates on women's rights, minority rights, the status of detainees and arrestees, and other incidents that we deem part of our mission.

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