

# Press Freedom Advocacy Association in Iraq

## Observation Report on Press Abuses in Iraq

January 1<sup>st</sup>- December 31<sup>st</sup>

2019

جمعية الدفاع عن حرية الصحافة  
Press Freedom Advocacy Association

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## 2019: Press Setback in Iraq

### Preface

Serious press freedom violations in Iraq dominated the scene in 2019, with unprecedented abuses recorded this year, the closure, threats and muzzles of mouths in a direct and public manner, and a relatively high number of total violations.

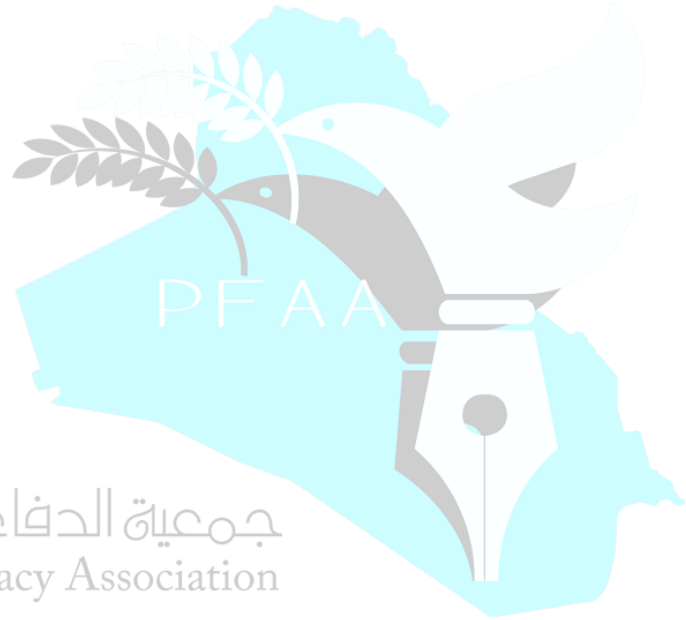
Press Freedom Advocacy Association in Iraq recorded 373 cases of attacks against journalists in various Iraqi cities, including assassination, death threats, physical liquidation, kidnapping, detention, beating, preventing and obstructing coverage and confiscation of media equipment, armed attacks on journalists and media organizations, injuring journalists, as well as the closure of media institutions, forced dismissals, lawsuits and arrest warrants, which also included unfair government decisions to restrict journalist freedom from action in Iraq.

Most of the cases were recorded after October 1<sup>st</sup>, with the outbreak of protests, the last quarter of 2019 witnessed the highest number of attacks since the regime's topple in 2003, posing a major threat to the freedom of journalistic work in Iraq, a restriction on press freedom, and an attempt to overthrow the fourth authority in the democratic-governed country.

The association recorded (210) cases of assault by beating and preventing and obstructing coverage, which supports the opinion of the association to tighten the dominion on journalists, but as for the distribution of violations according to the provinces, all Iraqi provinces witnessed types of violations against journalists, by Baghdad being on the top of the list, where There were 109 cases of violations, followed by Basra with 48 cases, and Mosul with 44, which means that the main cities in Iraq are the most ones violating the principles of the constitution that secures freedom of press work and the fourth authority in the country.

It is worth mentioning that the government's measures to isolate Iraq from the outside world, and the closure of the public atmosphere, after the cutting of the Internet service for several days during the days of demonstrations in

most cities of Iraq, except the Kurdistan region, and the blocking of social networking sites for nearly two months (October 2nd), is a flagrant violation of democratic standards and principles, the human rights regulations, and a violation of international conventions and treaties.



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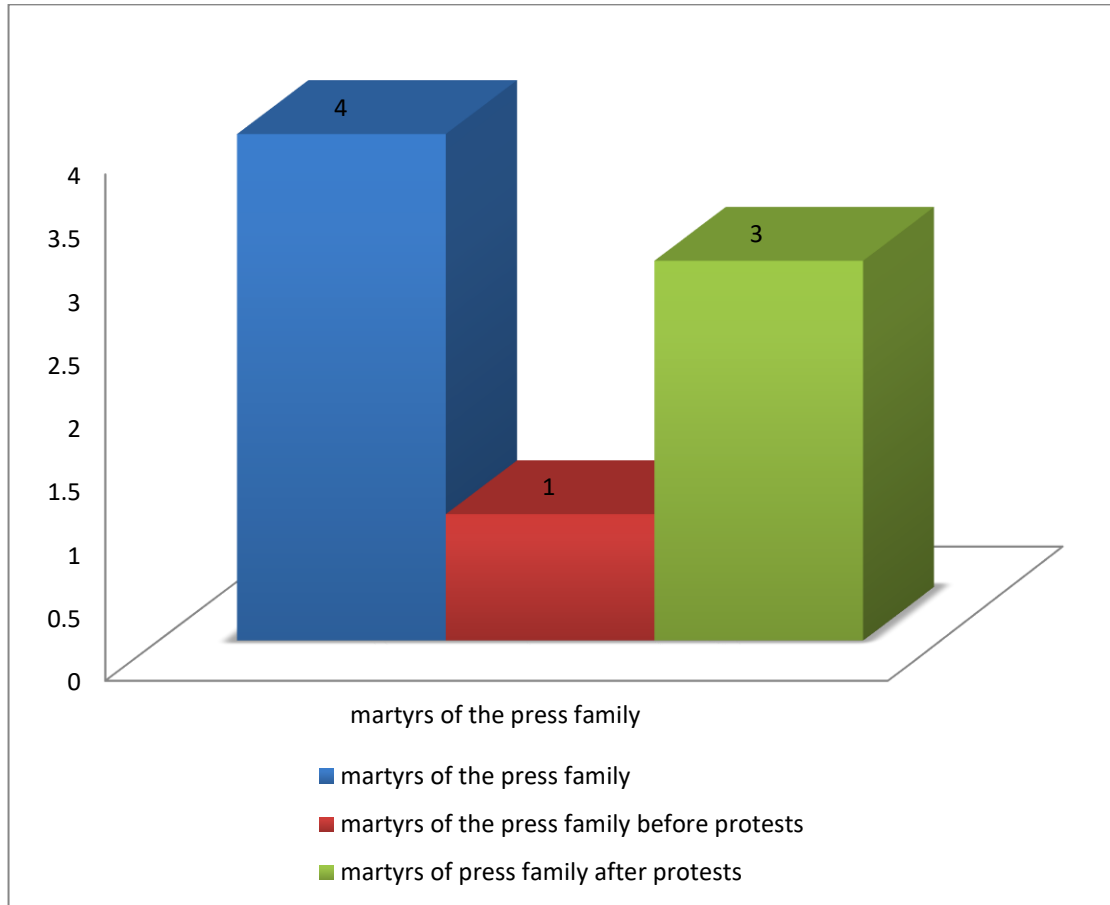
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## Digital summary of the report

Violations	Total Figure
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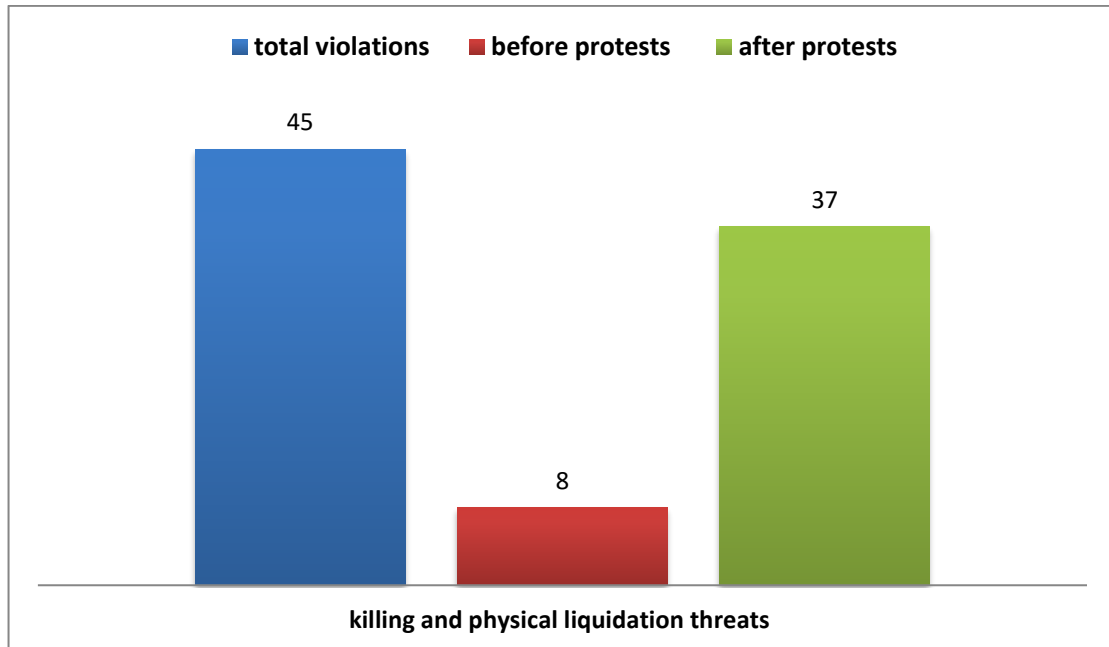
## Martyrs of the Press Family



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It is clear that the number of victims of the press family raised dramatically on the onset of the protests since October the first and three media persons were killed during only three months, where our fellow journalist Ahmad Almhanna, war cameraman, was the last one after being shot with a live bullet in Tahrir square.

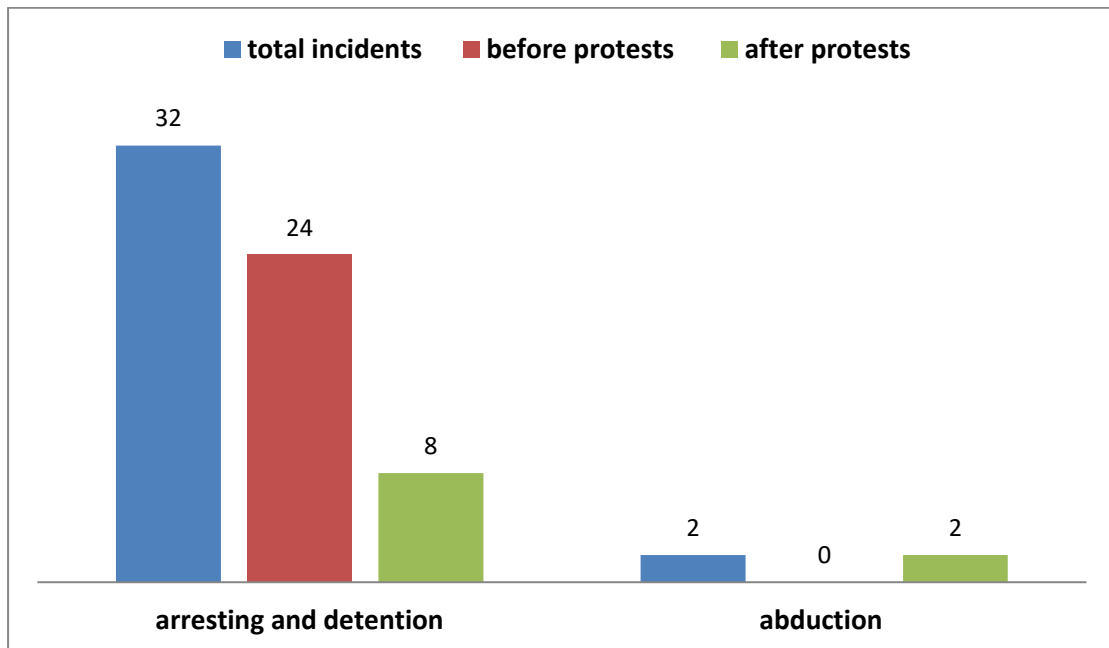
## Killing and physical liquidation threats



The significant difference in death threats and physical liquidation is noted, as the association recorded (37) cases of death threats against Iraqi journalists, compared to (8) before the start of the demonstrations.

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## Kidnapping, arresting and detention

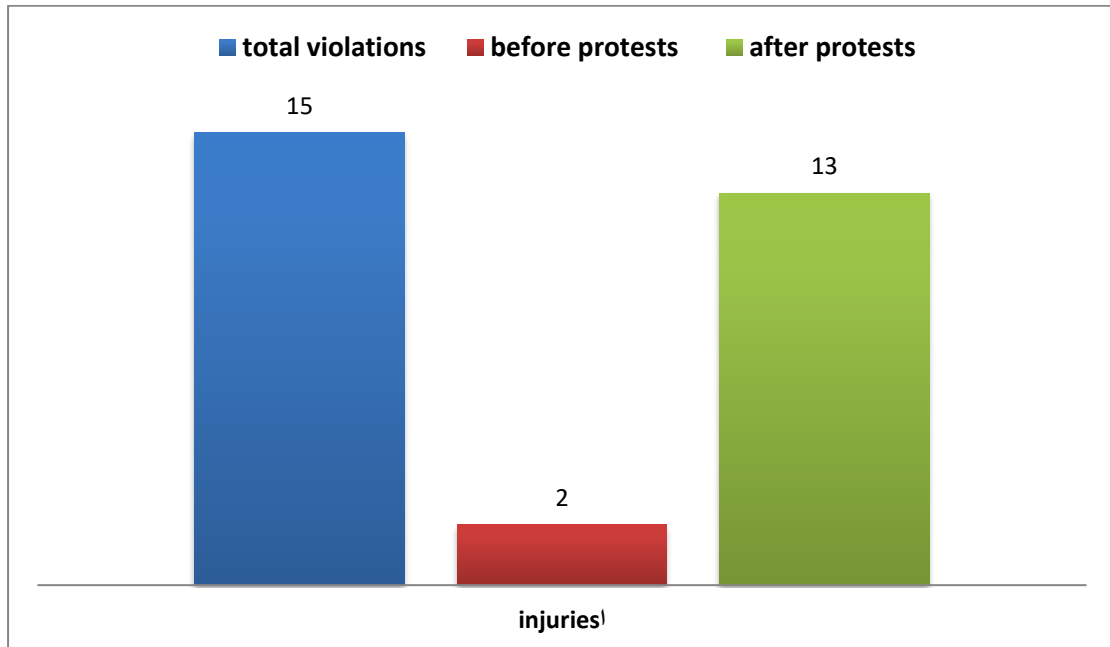


The above indicator shows a decrease in arrests and detentions after demonstrations, and the increase in kidnappings, where the association recorded the abduction of two colleagues, whereas no kidnappings took place before October 1<sup>st</sup>.

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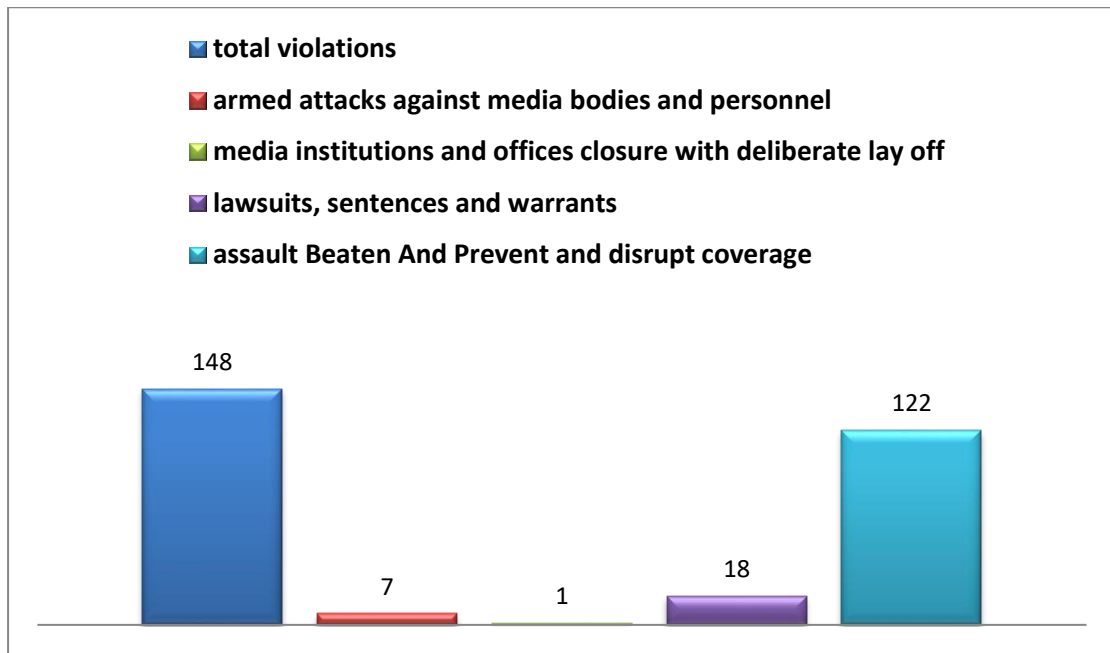
## Injuries due to coverage of demonstrations



The Figure above shows that the number of casualties has soared from two cases to 13 in the last three months, most of which were caused by live fire and tear gas canisters fired by security forces.

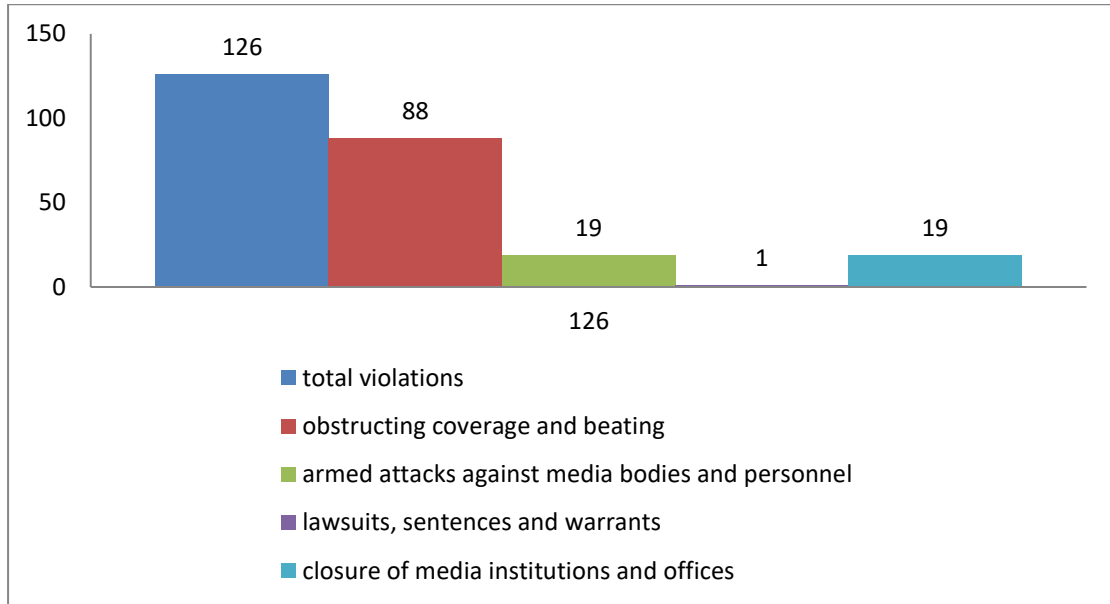
## Violations against Iraqi journalists before the protests

### Types of violations(total figures)



The above figure includes four types of violations; the most common from the beginning of the year until October 1<sup>st</sup>, namely assaults like beating and preventing and obstructing coverage, which is at the forefront of violations recorded in Iraq, followed by the filing of lawsuits, judgments and arrest warrants, which recording a large number of arrests against journalists as a result of the cancellation of the publishing court for the cases against them, but the armed attacks were in third place and evidence of the decline of the standards of democracy and violation of freedom of information and advertising, the last of which was a decision by the Media and Communications Commission to suspend the license of the Office of a Channel office in Baghdad since it was considered by the aforementioned commission as violating the norms of broadcast in the country.

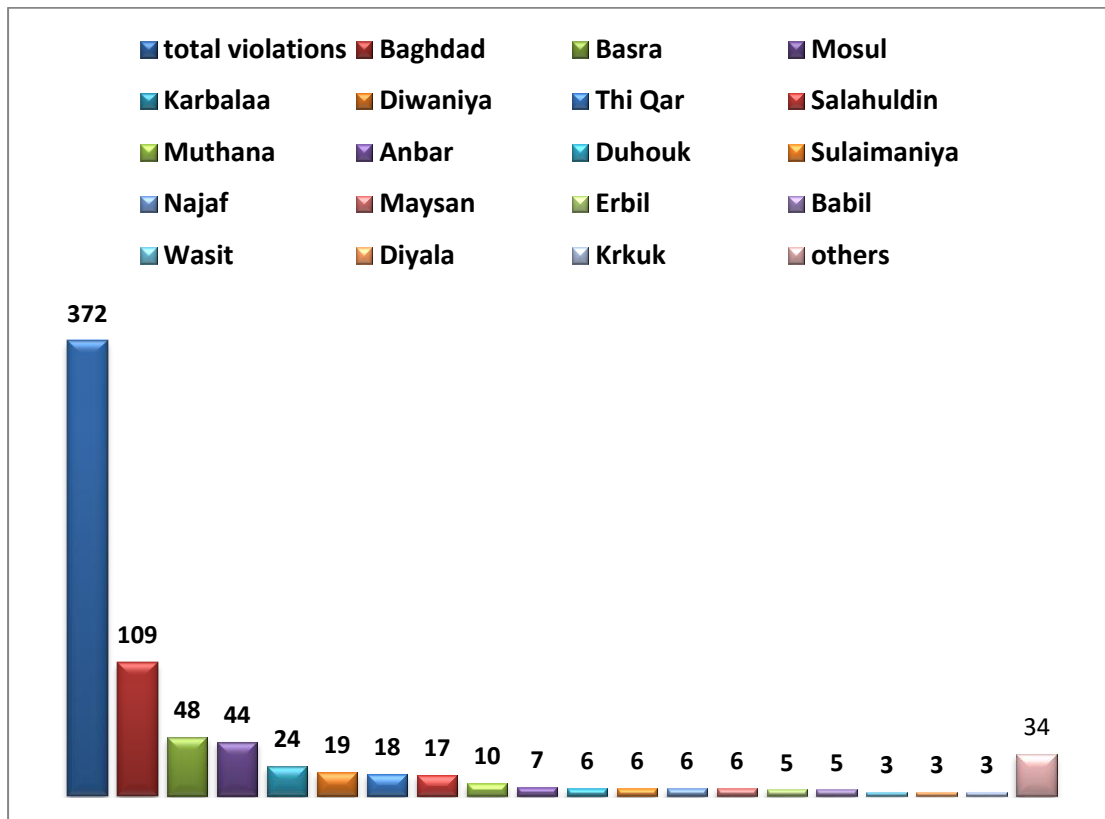
## Violations against Iraqi journalists during the protests



The figure above shows the extent of the violations that have affected journalists in different provinces during the last three months with a total of (126) cases, which constitutes a setback in the field of press freedom, and tops the assaults by beating and preventing and obstructing coverage again the record of violations where (88) cases are recorded in 90 days only meaning about an incident per day. Then we find the number of armed attacks against the press and its personnel that witnessed a rise during the protests compared to prior periods.

The closure of media institutions and offices has also had a share during the last three months especially during the protests while the association recorded a decline in the number of lawsuits filed against journalists, which recorded one case in the Kurdistan and none in the rest of Iraq's cities during the days of the demonstration, and the association attributes this to the general turbulent situation.

## Violations distributed upon provinces



It is clear from the figure above that the distribution of violations during the year according to the provinces show that the capital Baghdad comes first with (109) cases followed by Basra (48) and Mosul with (44) cases of violations and the rest of the violations are in lower shares, it should be noted that Kurdistan also had a share of violations where (17) cases were recorded in Sulaimaniya and Dohuk; 6 cases each and (5) others in Erbil.

## Laws and Bills that pose threat to press freedom in Iraq

- Information Crimes Bill
- Journalists' Rights Act
- Freedom of expression draft bill

### Laws inherited from the previous era have not been considered by parliament

\*Iraqi Penal Code 111 of 1969 / Articles of Publishing Crimes

\*Publications Act No. 206 of 1968

\*Dissolved Ministry of Information Law 2001

\*Censorship of Works and Movies No. 64 of 1973

\*CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority) Order No. 65 of 2003 concerning prohibited media activity, which gives the Prime Minister the power to close any media body and confiscate its equipment and money, and even imprison its employees.

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