

**Press Freedom Advocacy Association in Iraq**

**Replacing Bullets with Bars;  
Restrictions Continue Under the  
Previous Regime's Laws**

**Press Violations Monitoring Report / Iraq**

**1/1/2023 till 25/12/2023**

**Supervised by the Administrative Board of the Association**

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# Introduction

The Press Freedom Advocacy Association in Iraq has recorded serious indicators throughout the months and weeks of 2023 regarding the freedom of journalism and media work in the country. Increasing and twisted trends to suppress and intimidate journalists were identified whom journalists are exposed to on an almost daily basis.

The size of repression, prosecutions and interdiction has not differed from the past few years. This year saw a new strategy of intimidating journalists, replacing the bullets approach with lawsuits, prosecutions, prison threats and trials.

The documented cases of violations also reflect the seriousness of attempts to obliterate an explicit constitutional right. Serious attempts by the authorities to intimidate journalists on one hand, and to confront any other means that represent the other point of view without any legal basis on the other. as well as to take advantage of the pens and minds of journalists described as formerly opposing the Authority, all raise the concern about the right to freedom of journalism in Iraq.

The year 2023 witnessed the criminalization of journalists who work to expose corruption files or raise sensitive issues for public debate, despite Prime Minister Mohammed Shiyaa al-Sudan's promises to protect media workers, as well as irregularities in the international treaties and charters signed by successive Iraqi governments two decades ago to protect freedom of the press.

The cases of violations that were documented during 2023 have reached 256, as captured by the PFAA Monitoring System, classified as arrests, detentions, threats, raids or armed attacks against journalists' homes and media headquarters, injuries, beatings, preventing or obstructing work, and filing lawsuits, as shown below :

- 8 Iraqi journalists injured.
- 52 cases of detention.
- one documented case of threat.
- 19 incidents of breaking into and raiding journalists' homes or workplaces .
- 159 cases of obstructing and beating.
- 15 lawsuits filed against journalists.

The highest violation rates in 2023 were recorded in August, reaching 46 cases, followed by June, 41 of the year's total.

At the governorate level, Baghdad ranked first with 50 cases, followed by Erbil (47), followed by Basra (45), Kirkuk (29), Mosul (17), Dohuk (16), Anbar (12), Muthanna (12), Sulaimania (12), Maysan (9), Babil (3), Diwania (2), Thi-Qar (2), and a case of arresting an Iraqi journalist was recorded in Jordan.

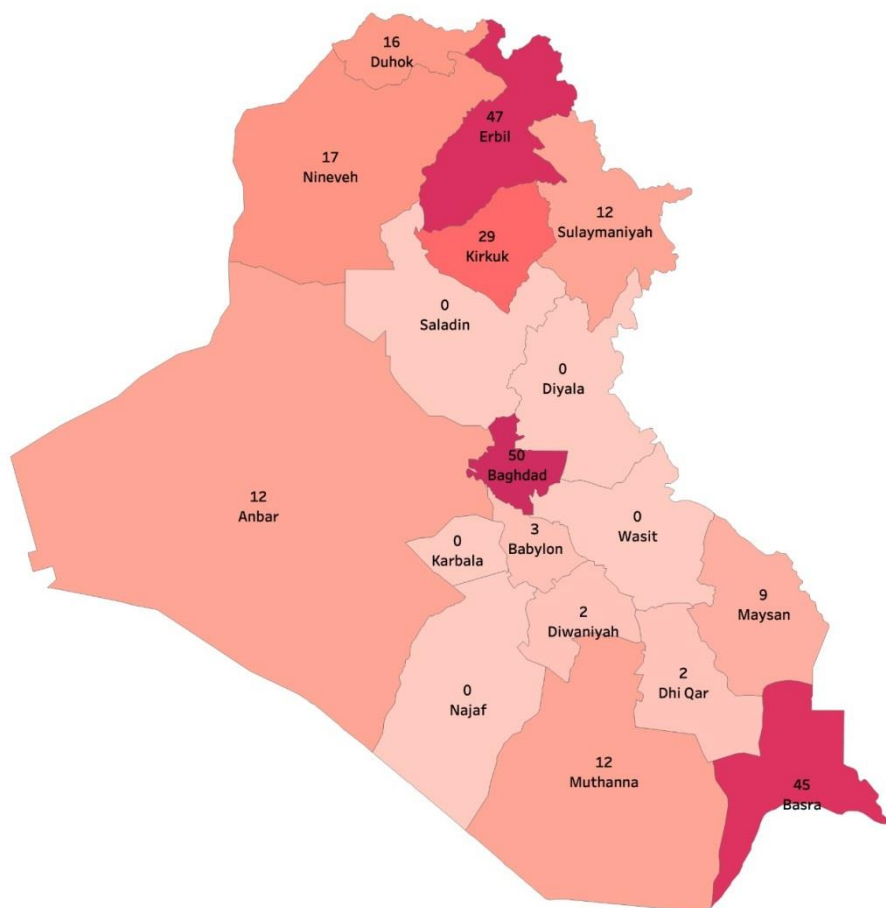
## Structure of Report

	Figurative Summary
	Introduction
	Timeline of violations
	Violations against journalists
	Mapping violations
	Sides responsible for violations
	Narrative
	Conclusion
	Recommendations

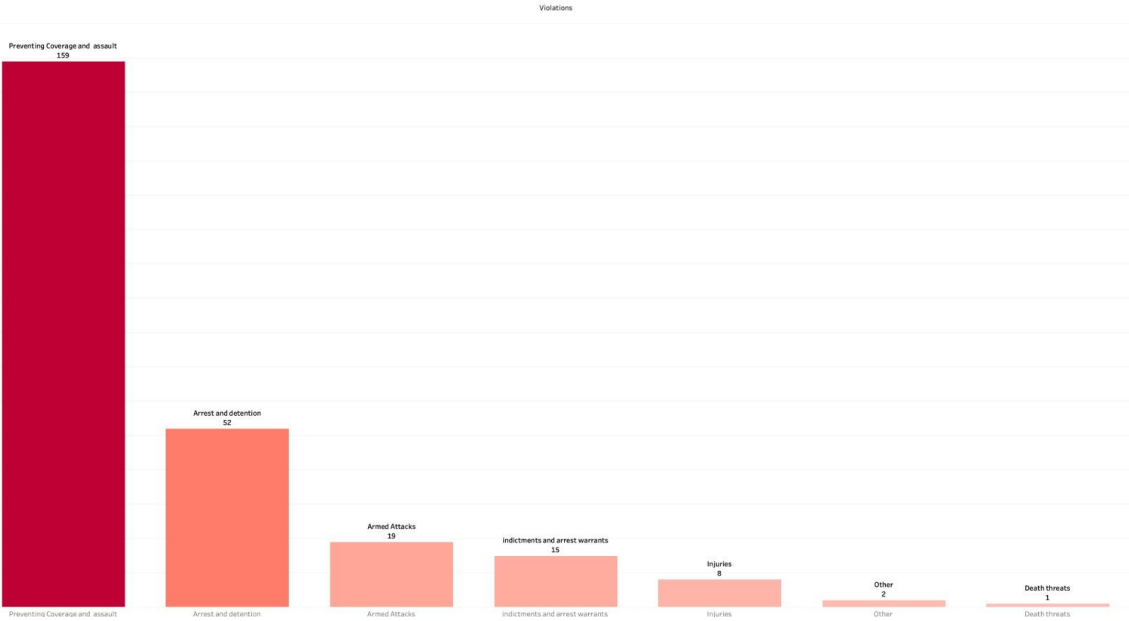
## Figurative report

Type of violation	Total
Total violations	256
Killing threats	1
Arrests and detentions	52
Injuries	8
Armed attacks against journalists' homes and offices	19
Beating assaults and obstructing coverage	159
Lawsuits, sentences and warrants	15
Others	2

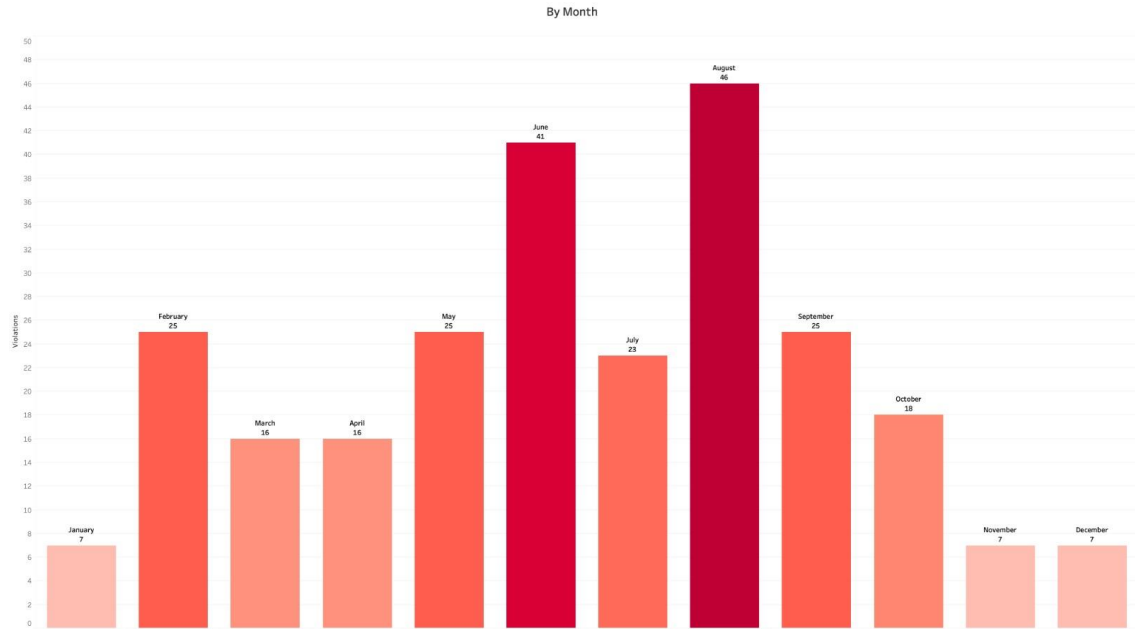
## Provincial- based statistics of violations in 2023



# Total violations imposed on Iraqi journalists in 2023

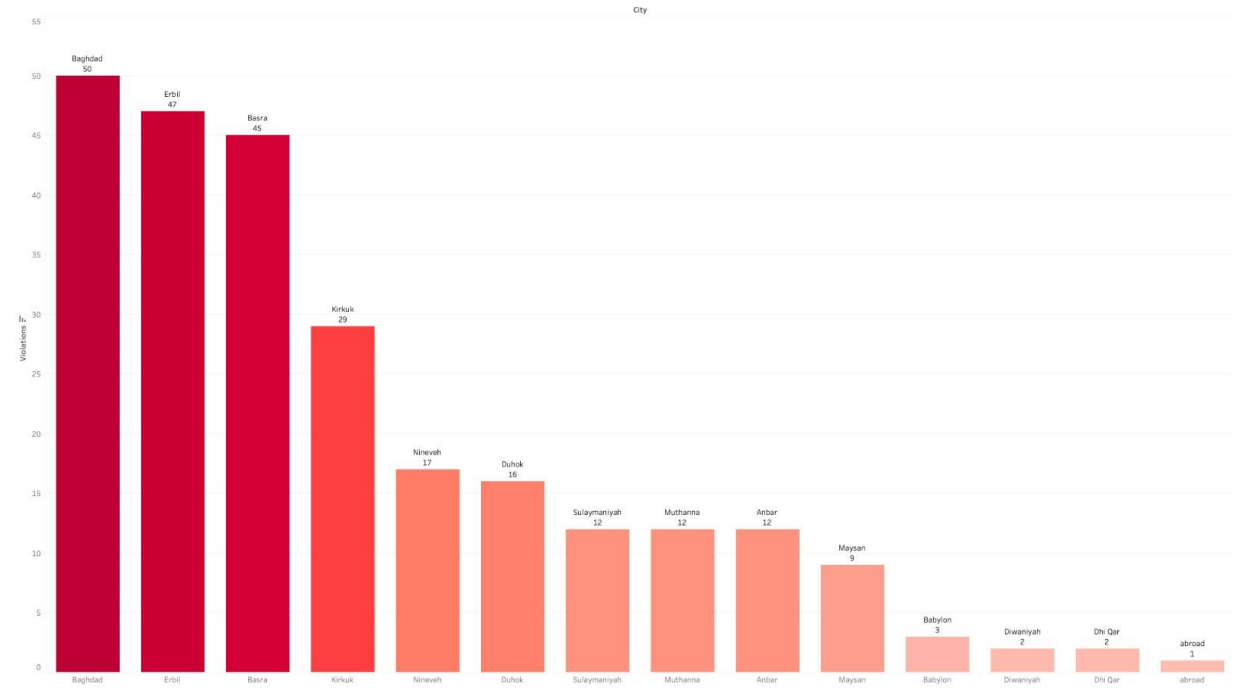


# Monthly based statistics of violations during 2023





# Provincial- based statistics of violations in 2023



# Statistics of the sides responsible for violations in 2023



# The Narrative Report

## Arrests and detentions

- On 23/1/2023, elements of Asayesh in Sulaymaniyah arrested the presenter of "KNN" channel, Soma Khalid where she received a notice to attend at Kordsat police station. Upon her arrival, she was placed in custody, under the pretext of filing a lawsuit by the management of "Char" Hospital for criticizing the poor conditions of the health institutions. The judge ordered that she would be transferred to the women's prison, before she was released on the next day after pressure from activists.
- On 15/2/2023, a security force in Anbar, arrested Al-Baghdadiyah channel cameraman, Nur Thammer Al-Khikani and his technical assistant Munir Al-Hassani, as they returned from Ramadi to Baghdad in the Falcons check point.
- On 9/3/2023, members of the Bakhtiyari police station in Erbil imprisoned Ali Abdul Karim, Al-Fallujah correspondent for three hours, following a press report released on 26/1/2022, in which he revealed the medical errors that took the victim's life, without mentioning the name of the doctor or hospital.
- On 11/3/2023, the security forces detained the cadre of BBC which was composed of four journalists, Franco Robert, Marcus John, Carl Lewis and Jeremy Nikki, in the Kask check point near Sinjar. the pretext was that they did not have a book from the Joint Operations Command, despite presenting their permits from the Media and Communications Commission and the National Operations Centre.
- On 8/4/2023, members of Asayesh Erbil Kader, consisting of correspondent Serwan Hussein and photographer Farman Abdelkader, were arrested and prevented from covering a demonstration organized by the Lebanese village community. They also confiscated the cadre's photographic equipment.
- On 17/4/2023, the security forces in Dohuk arrested Omid Brusckhe , director of "Rast media", and took him to the city police station to investigate about the nature of his journalistic work, and the possibility of changing his institution's working policy, for the

benefit of the regional government, after offering him financial support for his press establishment, provided that he ceased criticizing the ruling parties in Kurdistan. He was released after more than two hours and his laptop was confiscated.

- On 20/4/2023, security forces in Erbil detained members of the "Nrt" channel; correspondent Hirsch Kadir and cameraman Namu Mohammed, for an hour inside Hamrin Bank while they were on a special coverage in front of the bank meeting with Peshmerga retirees after the announcement of the region's Minister of Finance suspending their pension entitlements.
- On 7/5/2023, Assaish members detained Nrt correspondent Karim Keefe at the police station in Shakalawa to prevent him from coverage, seized his equipment and, in order to release him, forced him to sign a written pledge not to return to the area.
- On 16/5/2023 day, the Basra Court of Inquiry detained the programs presenter Haider al-Hamdani, after appearing in court for two lawsuits filed by the Governor of Basra, Asaad al-Eidani, for posting a video in which he spoke of a corruption file relating to the prices of the Gulf 25 billboards. The Court required a bail of 60 million Iraqi Dinars.
- On 27/5/2023, security in Sulaymaniyah detained 3 press cadres; correspondent and cameraman of "Rudaw" channel, Arkan Ali and Alan Osman, the correspondent and cameraman of "Piyam" channel, Ramyar Osman and Jihad Abdulrahman, and the correspondent and cameraman of "Nrt" channel, Kuran Laqqqman and Cuzan Kamran kamran.
- On 9/6/2023, a security officer in Basra detained Maher al-Rabaie, the correspondent of the "Alitijah" channel inside the gas station. After being seized he was beaten and verbally abused by two police officers, who confiscated his equipment to erase any recorded material.
- On 15/6/2023, the Jordanian authorities detained the presenter of the "AlShahid" program that is broadcasted on Utv by Hamid Abdullah. The incident took place because of a complaint submitted to a Jordanian non-judicial chamber, by one of those accused of the

“theft of the century” called "Louay Tamimi", following an article by the journalist that disclosed one of the defendants' luxurious purchases in Amman. The lawsuit was initiated in Baghdad.

- On 20/7/2023, members of "Order Police" in Baghdad arrested "Reuters" cameramen, Ahmed Saad, Maher Mashhadani and AP cameraman Hadi Mizbane, and took them to the detainee of the Green police station. They also assaulted Amir al-Mahmadawi, German Press Agency (DPA) cameraman who was severely beaten and his camera lens destroyed. The men were released without their equipment to keep the raiding of the Swedish embassy in Baghdad unrevealed.
- On the 21/7/2023, the security forces in Dohuk arrested the journalist Omid Brusckke for criticizing the judgement by extending the detention of his fellow arrested journalist, Shirwan Shirwani.
- On 25/7/2023, security agents detained a reporter and cameraman of "Nrt", Omid Gumani and Koran Abdul Khalek, to prevent them from covering a water outage in Erbil. The two journalists were only released after a written pledge to cease coverage.
- On 3/8/2023, the security services in Erbil detained members of "Nrt" channel; reporter Mourad Ahmed, and cameraman Shirwan Waleed at the city police station to prevent them from covering a demonstration in a popular market in Erbil and confiscated their equipment. They were released about an hour after their detention.
- On 10/8/2023, the protection force of Prime Minister Mohammed Shiyaa al-Sudani detained the crews of the "iNews, Dijla, AlSharqia, Aljanoubia, Alfurat, Iraqi News Agency" ; Hanaa AlQuraishi, Ali Jabbar, Edad AlMaqsousy, Ahmed AlSedikhan, Haider AlHasani, Aws Allnizy, Hasan Essa, Ahlam AlAboudi, and Mustafa AlBaldawy, to prevent them from covering the inauguration of the Turkish Hospital in Maysan.
- On 14/8/2023, Basra police detained a reporter and cameraman of "AlTaghyir" channel, Mustafa al-Shamri and Ahmed Zia, and a reporter of "iNews" channel, Fouad al-Halafi, to prevent them from covering a demonstration that erupted in front of the gate of an oil company.

- On 23/8/2023, security agents in Erbil detained the reporters of "Lat Media", and "Esta" agency; Diyar Hussein and Yasser Mohammed, as well as the cameraman, and seized their equipment. All the recorded material was scanned and erased as it showed the demonstration that was organized by the residents of the "Bahari Nui" neighborhood in protest against the flooded area due to the grid's malfunction.
- On 24/8/2023, a security force arrested "Islam Kashani" the director of Zakho channel and led him to an unknown destination, following the release of a video, in which he criticized the political leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Masood Barzani.
- On 1/9/2023, security forces detained Ali Ahmad, the cameraman of the "Fallujah" channel, for more than half an hour, while he was covering the return of visitors from the Arbain visit to Basra, on the grounds that he had not issued a permit to shoot in public places. He was released after a series of intermediaries.
- On 3/9/2023, A reporter and cameraman of "KNN" channel, Eugene Ramadan and Shirzad Hassan were detained for more than two hours by security agents in Kirkuk. The media workers were held inside an army vehicle while covering protests in Kirkuk. They were released and forced to leave the area immediately.
- On 29/10/2023, Kurdistan Security arrested Ruz News correspondent Suleiman Ahmed at the "Fishkhabur" gate that is adjacent to the Syrian border. The incident took place while he was returning from southern Kurdistan after he had visited his relatives in Aleppo. Sulaiman was led to an unknown destination for unknown reasons.

## Threats:

- On 2/2/2023, Jaafar Talk, a program that is broadcasted on the German DW, received threats of detention on the hands of a delegation from the Ministry of Interior that notified the presenter of their incapability of protecting him and that it is necessary to obtain approvals from the Communication and Media Commission, otherwise he and his team will be arrested. Accordingly his Baghdad episode was canceled and he immediately left the country.

## Armed attacks and raids against journalists' homes and offices:

- On 4/2/2023, a security force in Dohuk raided the home of Fakir Mohammed, Program presenter of "Gali Kurdistan" channel. The incident took place on the background of criticizing the policy and performance of the ruling Democratic Part in Kurdistan.
- On 10/2/2023, a security force from Asayesh raided Speda channel's office in Duhok, six workers were arrested, and the channel's equipment was confiscated on the basis of the coverage of a campaign to support the victims of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria. The violated personnel were reporters Azad Mukhtar and Amar Anas, cameramen Hajer Salman and Biwar Mustafa, presenter Dusky Sabri, and Channel's dubbing specialist Mohammed Gabrail. The members of staff were released after an hour.
- On 18/2/2023 day, unidentified gunmen on a motorcycle targeted the office of UTV, Baghdad, with a homemade bomb that failed to detonate, no damages have incurred. The incident followed UTV presenter Adnan Al-Tai's vigorous incitement campaign by political actors, after presenting a panel on arresting a group of content makers.
- On 24/3/2023, unidentified gunmen attacked the alternative building of Baghdadi channel in Baghdad, damaging the front yard of the headquarters without causing any human casualties. No journalists nor workers were present, and there were few guards

and cleaners, since the staff was dispatched to another headquarters for technical reasons.

- On 17/4/2023, a security force in Dohuk stormed the headquarters of Rast media, arrested its director, Omid Brusckke, and confiscated his press equipment, in opposition to the organization's policy.
- On 8/6/2023, the Sulaymaniyah police raided the house of the correspondent of the "Diplomatic Media" Foundation, Bashdar Abubakar Baziani, and took him to a police station for more than 10 hours, due to a lawsuit filed against him by the Head of the Kurdistan-Islamic Justice Group, Ali Babir, following a press report he was setting on the corruption involvement of the movement's political office.
- On 24/8/2023, the security services in the city of Zakho, Badhok, raided the house of the director of "Speda" channel, Islam Kashani, tampered the contents of the house without any search warrant. Kashani was detained for publishing a video criticizing the head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Masood Barzani.
- On 4/10/2023, supporters of the Sadrist movement stormed the office of the "Al-Baghdadiya" channel, after they organized a protest in front of the building located in the Abu Nawas area, central Baghdad, and the protesters closed the office, and tampered with its contents under the eyes of the security forces, in protest against what was stated in the talk of the presenter of the program on the channel, Ali Al-Dhubhawi, whom Al-Sadr's supporters considered offensive to their leader.
- On 20/10/2023, a security force stormed the "Kirkuk News" news office and arrested the site's director, Diler Darwish, and three other journalists, namely Iskandar Abdul Khaliq, Majid Muhammad, and Muhammad Qasim, and confiscated the agency's equipment, after the site revealed corruption files related to the acting governor of Kirkuk, and the local government.
- On 3/12/2023, supporters of the Sadrist movement tried to storm the building of the "Al-Sumaria" channel and "Al-Sumaria News" agency in the Karrada area in central Baghdad, against the background of the agency's publication of a press release that the



supporters of the movement considered an abuse to their leader. Al-Sumaria presented an official apology, and published it through the channel's website and the agency, the demonstrators withdrew from the site. the channel's management dismissed the editor who published the news, and another editor was expelled after objecting to the dismissal of his colleague from the agency.

- On 19/12/2023, unknown gunmen set fire to the headquarters of NRT TV in Kirkuk, late at night, causing serious damage to the façade of the building, and the Kirkuk police confirmed that the incident was intentional, and that it was accompanied by riots and shooting after the announcement of the results of the provincial council elections.

## Injuries

- On 17/4/2023, Reporter Ahmed Mustafa and cameraman Omar Hassan both from the Knn channel, were injured in the head and neck by unknown persons in civilian clothes. They were attacked during the coverage of an event of Kurdish costumes festival in Erbil Citadel Market. The injuries led the crew to the hospital for treatment.
- On 3/9/2023, three reporters and a cameraman were slightly injured in Kirkuk; correspondent of "Syria Today" channel, Haider Odeh, the correspondent of "Ava News" channel, Rukan Jaf, the reporter and the cameraman of "Kirkuk News", Iskandar Abdul Khaliq Amin, and Firas Abdullah. The mentioned colleagues were caught in the middle of a stampede that took place during the dispersal of protesters in Kirkuk. The conflict erupted over the return of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's control over the headquarters it occupied before the Iraqi army took control of in 2017.
- On 14/10/2023, two cameramen, Thaer Al-Sudani and Maher Al-Mashhadani from "Reuters" agency, were slightly injured, after a

shrapnel fell, as a result of the Israeli shelling on southern Lebanon. The attack targeted the agency's vehicle forcing them to return to Baghdad.

### Beatings, obstruction and denying coverage

- On 19/1/2023, Reporter Rukan Jaf, and cameraman Karzan Kake Rash, from "Zoom News" and reporters Ahmed Abdullah and Nihad Hassan, from "Bass News" and "Abora News" agencies were beaten, prevented from coverage and their equipment was confiscated by members of the security forces while they were near the Palm Stadium in Basra preparing to cover the Gulf 25 final match between Iraq and Oman.
- On 29/1/2023, members of the Kirkuk Operations Command prevented the Fallujah TV cadre, reporter Abdullah Al-Ameri and cameraman Luay Karim, from entering the Rawan City residential complex, to cover the crash of a spying plane inside the complex.
- On 7/2/2023, members of the movements of the ninth Anbar Emergency Regiment prevented "Al-Rasheed" channel cadre, reporter Qatada Adel and cameraman Muhammad Odeh, from filming inside the popular Ramadi market. The coverage was to investigate public opinion on their daily needs' prices, but one of the checkpoints prevented them from filming despite obtaining a letter to facilitate their mission from the Anbar Police Command.
- On 19/2/2023, the Director of Internal Department Affairs of the Technical University in Erbil prevented the correspondents of (Bouar Media, Sharpers, Kobas, Ista Walat, and NRT channel), namely Nabz Rashad, Hazar Anwar, Timan Rawandezi, Ayoub Saleh, Muhammad Khalil Shawani, Jumani Mahmoud, from covering a student demonstration. The forces assaulted the reporters by severe beating, breaking their equipment, asking them to leave the demonstration site, and to stop filming at once.
- On 20/2/2023, security personnel in Erbil prevented the "NRT" channel's reporter Joman Mahmoud and cameraman Ahmed Mohamed, as well as the staff of "Bwar media" channel, reporter

Nabaz Rashad and his cameraman, from covering the tight situation of the recent dollar crisis in the country especially for those who need to travel and were gathering in front of a branch of RT Bank. At once, security forces stormed the filming site and prevented them from completing coverage.

- On 27/2/2023, an officer in the security forces near the Green Zone withdrew the equipment of the "Al-Ahed" channel crew; reporter Sajjad Raad, and cameraman Saddam Atwan, to prevent them from covering a demonstration organized by prisoners of the 1991 Gulf War. Soldiers were ordered to confiscate their cameras and mobile phones .
- On 11/3/2023, the Falcons checkpoint prevented a foreign press crew from reaching the city of Fallujah under the pretext that they did not have a letter from the Joint Operations Command as well.
- On 11/3/2023, the authorities of Baghdad International Airport confiscated one of the cameras from a Russian press team headed by reporter "Vladimir Kothenkop", who had obtained the approval of the Media and Communications Commission, but the security forces at the airport insisted on confiscating the camera.
- On 11/3/2023, security personnel guarding the PUK building prevented the "Bwarnews" TV crew, consisting of reporter Nabz Rashad, and cameraman Aras Aziz from entering the building. They were supposed to cover a meeting of political parties in the region, but were demanded to leave immediately.
- On 15/3/2023, members of the riot police prevented the correspondent of the "Larsa News" agency, Khudair Al-Salhi, from covering the protests that erupted to demand the provision of potable water. The incident took place in the Islah district of Dhi Qar governorate.
- On 6/4/2023, security elements prevented the correspondent of the "Kursat News" channel, Walat Hassan, from entering "Ashti" hospital in Soran district of Erbil, to meet with the wounded who were transferred to the hospital due to a landmine explosion. The coverage was denied under the pretext of security directives .

- on 13/4/2023, Members of the security forces in Erbil prevented the staff of Sharpress media; reporter Hazar Anwar and cameraman Periyar Mohammed, from covering the commemorative march of the Halabja genocide crime. The security confiscated their press equipment, and damaged their personal phones
- On 20/4/2023, the security personnel in Erbil prevented the staff of the "Sharpress" media site, reporter Hazar Anwar Gohar and cameraman Periyar Muhammad, from covering a gathering organized by a group of military retirees affiliated with the Peshmerga in front of the Hamrin Bank building.
- On 27/4/2023, the security elements in the two directorates of passports in the areas of (Al-Mansour and Zayouna) in Baghdad prevented "Al-ahad" cadre; reporter Muhammad Al-Farid and cameraman Imad Hamid, from performing a special coverage to reveal the reasons of delay in issuing passports. The security elements prevented the crew from meeting with citizens.
- On 11/5/2023, the Federal Police in Kirkuk prevented the reporter and cameraman of "Zoomtv" channel (Rukan Mahmoud, Karzan Kake Pasha) from covering a mass grave inside AlAthraa base in Kirkuk, and wiped the entire documented material from the camera.
- On 12/5/2023, the security services in Nineveh prevented all media outlets from covering the visit of Prime Minister Mohammed Shiyaa Al-Sudani to the governorate. The cameraman of "Hona Baghdad" channel ,Muhammad Al-Abbasi, and the reporter and cameraman of "iNews" Saad Mansour and Mahmoud Hazem, were denied coverage and performing their duties.
- On 16/5/2023, the protection officer in the Dijla village building in Baghdad,prevented Al-Rasheed TV correspondent and cameraman Ali Al-Amiri, Uday Fawzi, from covering the Golden Crescent ceremony that was celebrating the artists inside the village.
- On 24/5/2023, the Sulaymaniyah police prevented the reporter and cameraman of "Ronmedia" news website; Jalal Mohammed and Omid Yassin, from completing their work on a report that addressed

car speed cameras and fining violators. The police confiscated their equipment to scan the documented content.

- On 12/6/2023, Duhok police seized the equipment of the reporter and cameraman of "NRT" channel team; Briar Nairawi and cameraman Adel Sabri, and destroyed their cameras. The assault was to prevent them from covering a demonstration of car shop owners in Dohuk.
- On 17/6/2023, the Prime Minister's protection prevented the cameramen Musa Jassim, Nabil Qassem, Qutayba Rashid, Ahmed Alerkabi, Laith Jawamir, and the correspondents of satellite channels "Zagros, Al-Sumaria, E-News, Al-Ghadir, Al-Ahed, Fallujah, Al-Jazeera, UTV, Diwan Al-Hurra", from covering the "Iraqi Press Day" concert, which was held at the Rashid Hotel, in the presence of the Journalists Syndicate.
- On 25/6/2023, members of the company responsible for the reconstruction of heritage houses in Basra prevented the teams of "Iraqiya, Al-Mirbad, Al-Janoub Satellite Channel, WTV, and the Voice of Basra and Shanashil radios" from filming the opening ceremony of the reconstructed houses, which was attended by officials in the Ministry of Culture and a representative of the United Nations "UNESCO".
- On 8/7/2023, Duhok police refused to hand over the equipment of the "Rast Media" media foundation, consisting of three desktop computers, a fourth laptop, a camera and its accessories, and other devices that were confiscated at the time of storming the institution's building and arresting its director, last April.
- On 15/7/2023, the protection of Prime Minister Mohamed Al-Sudani prevented all media from covering his visit to Muthana Governorate, and the provincial council issued instructions based on orders issued by the protection not to allow the presence of any media outlet to cover the visit.
- On 16/7/2023, members of the Sunni Endowment Office seized the equipment of Fallujah TV cameraman Hamza Fares after he covered a conference opened by the head of the Sunni Endowment, Mishaan Al-Khazraji, with a speech in which he incorrectly recited

parts of the Qur'an. All material was erased after the seizing of the equipment.

- On 16/7/2023, a security officer, along with four security affiliates, beaten the cameraman of the "Al-Rabia" channel, Ahmed Fahd, to prevent him from covering the match between the Basra Oil and Industry teams inside the Sports City Stadium in Basra. The cameraman was released only after a series of mediations.
- -In an unsettling incident on 3/8/2023, the office of the Operations Commander in Sumer barred a correspondent from "Al-Fallujah" channel, Saad Al-Rikabi, from performing his duties at a security conference, even resorting to threats of confiscating his journalistic equipment and potential arrest.
  
- On 7/8/ 2023, security forces in Erbil prevented journalists from "Westika News," ; Nabzrshad and Hussein Farhad, from covering a protest organized by poultry farmers. The journalists faced verbal abuse as they set up their equipment for reporting.
- on 7/8/2023 the police in Kirkuk raided the journalistic teams from media outlets like Rudaw, Bas News, Kirkuk Now, Nrt, and others, hindering their coverage of a demonstration near the Antiquities Department.
  
- Alarming actions were taken by Asayish forces in Erbil on 15/8/2023, confiscating the equipment of five journalist teams, including reporters from "Baz Media," "Khur Media," "Kurdistan Press," "Gomar TV," and "Khawork Media," during their attempt to cover a Peshmerga conference. Threats of arrest and imprisonment loomed if any information about the conference was disseminated.
  
- In a disturbing turn of events on 26/8/ 2023, security personnel at Khormal Hospital in Halabja seized the camera of Speda's journalist,

Shakhwan Saeed, erasing images documenting a traffic accident in the area.

- On 2/9/ 2023, security in Basra prohibited several news channels, including Al-Hurra, Al-Taghyeer, Al-Rasheed, Al-Jonubiya, Al-Ittijah, and Emirati News Agency, from covering the ceremony of the railway junction with Iran project. Despite having official entry permits, journalists were barred from the event.
- on 16/9/ 2023, a police officer in Basra preventing "Al-Fallujah" channel's correspondent and cameraman, Khaled Ibrahim and Ali Ahmed, from filming near banking offices in AlJazair district, demanded an official authorization from Basra Police Command to conduct the coverage.
- -On 18/9/ 2023, security personnel from "Al-Murouj" investment company in Diwaniyah denied entry to the journalist Jwad Al-Naeli from Al-Manar News Agency, demanding him to leave immediately when attempting to cover one of their projects, a health center.
- -On 19/9/ 2023, the Western Ninawa Operations Command restricted Turkmen Eli channel's team; correspondent Mustafa Al-Salehi, a cameraman, and the channel's general manager, from passing through the "Kask" checkpoint to enter Tal Afar, preventing them from recording a special episode on provincial council elections.
- -on 2/10/ 2023, a security element in Kirkuk forced Knn channel's team, including correspondent Ojin Ramadan and cameraman

Mohammad Wahab, to cease filming an educational staff protest demanding their overdue payments.

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- In 13/10/ 2023, members of the Anbar police demanded a formal letter from the Anbar Police Command to allow the "Utv" team, consisting of correspondent Nabil Azzami and cameraman Tahir Al-Tai, to cover a solidarity demonstration organized by Fallujah residents condemning the Israeli bombardment of Gaza. The journalists confirmed to the association that the Anbar Police Command refuses to issue any work permits for journalists and media professionals to cover events.
- On 14/10/ 2023, a security personnel in Basra prevented the correspondent for "Iraq 24," Younis Ali, and his cameraman Ali Al-Massi, from performing their duties in Kut al-Hajaj Street due to heavy traffic. They were required to obtain authorization from the Basra Police Commander to film. They stated that there are instructions by the Basra Police Chief that all media outlets can only film after obtaining an exclusive authorization from the command.
- -On 16/10/ 2023, the Media and Communications commission prohibited all media outlets from hosting the political analyst Ahmed Al-Abyad due to describing his statements as "threatening to the democratic system in the country." The authority warned all media outlets of legal consequences if they violated the directive.
- On 18/10/ 2023, riot police prevented the "Al-Ahd" channel team; Ali Jassim and Daa Munaim, from covering a demonstration in Tahrir Square in Baghdad denouncing the bombing of a hospital in Gaza.
- On 24/11/ 2023, security forces on Mutanabi Street prevented the correspondent for "Al-Baghdadia," Ramy Al-Hamdani, and his cameraman from performing their duties based on orders from the Baghdad Police in collaboration with the Media and Communications commission, stating that "Al-Baghdadia" was prohibited from filming on Mutanabi Street.



- On 28/11/ 2023, the Basra police continued to demand security approvals from journalists before filming anywhere in the province, preventing the correspondent and cameraman for "Al-Ahd," Fadel Al-Batati and Mohamed Mufeed, from filming on the Basra corniche.
- On 29/11/ 2023, Minister of Education Ibrahim Namis Al-Jubouri issued a decree prohibiting all media from entering educational buildings or schools and filming without obtaining exclusive authorization from the ministry. This decision was made during his inspection visit to the construction of schools as part of the Chinese loan project in Al-Karkh districts.
- On 2/12/ 2023, security forces in Anbar prevented "Al-Ittijah" channel team, including correspondent Qatada Adel and his cameraman, Mohamed Al-Khatter, from coverage in the Ramadi market. The team was required to obtain approval exclusively from the Anbar Police Commander to allow them to film.

### Lawsuits, Court Sentences and Warrants

- -On 15/3/2023, the Erbil court issued a second verdict, sentencing journalist "Kohdar Zibari" to 7 months in prison on the charge of "replacing his vehicle's license plate." This comes after he had already served over two years in prison on charges of undermining national security in the Kurdistan region. The second sentence was based on Article 279, a legal provision related to forging vehicle numbers. The journalist, however, changed the license plate and not its number. He was fined only 15,000 Iraqi dinars, recorded exclusively by the traffic department.
- -On 21/3/2023, the Criminal Directorate in the Ministry of Interior filed a lawsuit in the Rusafa court against the director of "iNews" TV

channel, Ahmed Saddam Sahin, and the channel's correspondent Israa Khaled. The lawsuit followed a report by the channel revealing corruption charges in the Police Affairs Agency under the Ministry of Interior.

- -On 3/4/2023, the family of a girl featured in a televised report by Fallujah correspondent Ammar Al-Taie accused him of forgery for exposing their attempt to deprive her of her inheritance. The family filed a lawsuit against the journalist for conveying the plea to the authorities, seeking a solution to her case. The investigating judge transferred the correspondent to the Al-Fayhaa Police Station, detaining him until posting a bail of 10 million Iraqi dinars.
  
- -On 16/5/2023, Mahmoud Al-Naemi, the director of "Euphrates Bride" news agency in Anbar, continued attending court sessions for a year. He faced a lawsuit from the Police and Rescue Directorates in Fallujah, accusing him of writing posts on social media that incite protests.
  
- On 18/6/2023, the Iraqi judiciary issued a decision prohibiting journalist Qahtan Adnan from traveling due to an unresolved lawsuit filed by lawyer Ahmed Shahid, close to the Al-Itar Al-Tansiqi (coordination framework) citing violations of customs and laws.
  
- -On 21/6/2023, Wtv channel's cameraman in Diwaniya, Mustafa Al-Miyahi, received notifications of two legal actions for releasing a video about a property manipulation case in Diwaniya. The journalist was detained during his appearance in court and was released only after signing financial guarantees.

- -On 6/7/2023, the Investigative Court in Al-Karkh issued a warrant against the program host on "One News," Qahtan Adnan. The charges were claimed to be related to broadcasting content inconsistent with morals and public norms.
- -On 20/7/2023, Erbil court issued a new verdict, sentencing journalist Shirwan Shirwani to 4 years in prison. He was accused of signing instead of a friend while serving his sentence in prison and impersonating another person. The journalist informed the court that security officers in the detention facility forced him to sign documents without knowledge of their contents.
- -On 19/8/2023, Kurdistan authorities refused to release journalist "Kohdar Zibari" after completing his sentence and falsely charged him with possessing his grandfather's weapon, kept by his family since 1960.
- -On 3/10/2023, Erbil court issued a third sentence, imprisoning journalist Kohdar Zibari for three years. The verdict was issued despite the journalist informing the court that the weapon did not belong to him, was unregistered in his name, and was a hunting weapon, not intended for combat. The judge released the verdict without calling for witnesses nor listening to the suspect.
- -On 8/11/2023, the Federal Appeals Court in Babil sent journalist Ammar Al-Taie, from Dijlah channel, to prison for two months after a lawsuit was filed against him by the relatives of a family in Babil. The lawsuit accused the journalist of revealing the theft of their sister's inheritance in a journalistic report prepared by the correspondent almost a year ago.

- -On 19/11/2023, Wtv program host Qusay Shafiq received two legal complaints that were filed against him by Prime Minister Mohammed Shiyaa Al-Sudani in the specialized Karkh Investigative Court. The complaints were related to his exposing the corruption in the Prime Minister's office and discussing the case of smuggling dollars abroad.
- -On 3/12/2023, the Erbil Passport Directorate refused to renew the passport of TV program host Mohammad Jabbar, following a notice from the federal government in Baghdad. The move was seen as pressuring him to return to Baghdad in preparation for his arrest and trial. Legal actions were taken against him for hosting a person who made accusations and criticisms against the judiciary, leading to the suspension of his program "Clearly said" on Zaghros channel at the government's request.
- -On 14/12/2023, the judiciary referred Ali Al-Khayal, the program host on Al-Baghdadia channel, to the Central Criminal Court for investigation. He faced a lawsuit filed by Prime Minister Mohammed Shiyaa Al-Sudani and presented by the Central Intelligence Agency and Counter-Terrorism, accusing the journalist of promoting Ba'ath Party ideas through his programs on Al-Baghdadia channel.

## Others

- -On 9/8/ 2023, the head of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate, "Azad Hamah Amin," revoked the membership of the news editor at Nawa Radio, Mohammad Fateh, from the union. This decision was made due to his publication of details regarding his affiliation with the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, claiming that the journalist belonged to two similar unions at the same time.

- -On December 1, 2023, the Iraqi government blocked the "Ultra Iraq" news website for unknown reasons. The blocking did not follow government protocols, such as notifying the blocked entity, and the news site is not associated with terrorist organizations or the explicit content sites that the Ministry of Communications announced blocking. The government has not provided any explanation for this action to date.

### Side incidents

-On 9/4/ 2023, NRT channel's cameraman, Ahmed Ali, lost his life after falling from Mount Piramajrun while filming a television program in Sulaymaniyah city.

### Conclusion

The above figures reveal the extent of intimidation and persecution experienced by journalists in Iraq, as well as the impunity of influential and authoritarian entities in violating the law and constitution. They exploit the laws of the dictatorial era to suppress, intimidate, and displace journalists.

This comes after years of procrastination and evasion in addressing the impunity file, regarding crimes committed against journalists. Multiple authoritative entities collaborate in delaying justice and refraining from pursuing criminals involved in killings, assassinations, threats, torture, and harassment against journalists.

To add to all of this, a new authoritarian approach has emerged, hiding behind the cloak of contradictory dictatorial laws that conflict with the constitution. This approach threatens journalists and opinion leaders, especially after the death squads have been nourished by the blood of journalists in recent years, with many of them remaining at large.

During this year, security leaders have stood out with their individual decisions, announcing their intention to stifle all media workers, whether working within the country or foreign journalists. They impose conditions, restrictions, and bureaucratic correspondences to comfortably enforce their individual whims, without any government intervention or recommendations from the office of the commander-in-chief to protect press freedom from this strange temper.

The Media and Communications Commission has also become an authoritarian tool to target journalists, imposing guardianship on media outlets, controlling their choices, and threatening them with frequent blockages. The authority has transformed from an independent organization regulating broadcast frequencies into a federal media ministry, serving, in an unacceptable manner, the authoritarian mood, other entities, and authorities.

The Iraqi government has gone further by blocking a well-known news website on the recommendation of the Prime Minister's office, without legal basis. This is reminiscent of a dictatorial government that believes it possesses the capacity to silence opposing views, rather than regulating them for the public good.

This approach indicates the existence of an authoritarian approach that is moving swiftly to narrow the remaining space for freedom of expression and journalistic work in the country, subjecting everyone to the official governmental discourse, and suppressing any dissenting opinion.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing, the Press Freedom Advocacy Association (PFAA) presents its recommendations to the Parliament and international organizations concerned with human rights, freedom of expression, and the press:

- 1. Expedite the enactment of the Right to Access Information law.**
- 2. Legislate a law to revive the Media and Publication Court, directing the courts to prioritize cases involving journalists.**
- 3. Instruct the Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces to direct all security forces and operational leadership to refrain from targeting journalists and to punish violators.**
- 4. Urge the federal government to address the cases of journalists detained in the prisons of the Kurdistan Region, reviewing the charges against them.**
- 5. Require the Communications and Media Commission to adhere to its designated responsibilities, cease dictating the media outlets with its unconstitutional limitations in order to appease the political class, and commit to the constitution.**
- 6. Review the file of ending impunity in crimes committed against journalists with the aim of addressing it earnestly.**