

جمعية الدفاع عن حرية الصحافة في العراق

**Press Freedom Advocacy Association in Iraq**

**The Fourth Authority Suffocated by the Other Three**

**Courts Intensify Saddamist Laws**

Violations against Iraqi Journalists

**Monitoring Report**

Issued on the International Day for Freedom of Press

**3/5/2023 - 2/5/2024**

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

**Prepared by Nagham Kamil**

**Translated by Amal Ibrahim**

## Contents

<b>ent</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Violations in Numbers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Timeline</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Geographical Distribution</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Violating Sides</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Narrative</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>26</b>

## Introduction

The Press Freedom Advocacy Association in Iraq has recorded a rise in the number of cases of detention, arrests, judicial prosecutions, and various harassments aimed at preventing coverage over the past months (May 2023 – May 2024). This development raises serious concerns about the deteriorating state of press freedom in Iraq.

During this period, there has been an increase in the pace of judicial rulings, arrest warrants, summons, and absentia verdicts against journalists, in accordance with laws inherited from the previous dictatorial era. This underscores the Iraqi judiciary system's role in supporting the persecution of journalists in an unprecedented manner.

The violations indicate a systematic and aggressive approach employed by the authorities, sometimes by political entities and influential figures, utilizing legal persecutions to silence journalists. At other times, security forces are instructed to chase journalists in the streets and prevent them from filming, as in Basra under orders from the province's police chief.

Governmental "independent" bodies and press unions have also emerged as supporting tools for the intimidation and repression of journalists, being subjected to directives beyond their operational contexts, including the blocking of news websites and journalistic groups to appease influential figures in power.

Some journalists have faced repercussions for exercising their constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression, including disciplinary actions such as dismissal, transfer, marginalization, and exclusion by heads of some media institutions.

The government's silence regarding the police methodology, legal persecutions, and exclusion of journalists contradicts Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani's promises upon assuming power to protect media freedom, establish democracy, and uphold freedoms, making him accountable for numerous violations documented in this report.

Among the new violations witnessed in Iraq concerning press freedom, the Iraqi authorities have violated all legal and constitutional frameworks by secretly and covertly blocking several news websites and social media groups or pages without any explanation from any governmental entity. Websites such as "Tura Iraq" and "Al-Hudood Network" were blocked from all search engines and internet servers in Iraq, without those responsible for these websites understanding the legal reasons behind the authorities' actions.

The details below have been documented by the Press Freedom Advocacy Association during the period covered by this report, with a total of **333** violations, including detentions, arrests, injuries, as well as raids, invasions, or armed attacks on journalists' homes and media headquarters, physical assaults, obstruction or prevention of work, and filing of lawsuits, distributed as follows:

- **(53)cases of detention and arrest.**
- **(6)cases resulted in injuries.**
- **(12)cases involved armed attacks.**
- **(232) instances of obstruction, prevention, and physical assault.**
- **(22)cases of lawsuits filed against journalists.**
- **(8)other cases.**

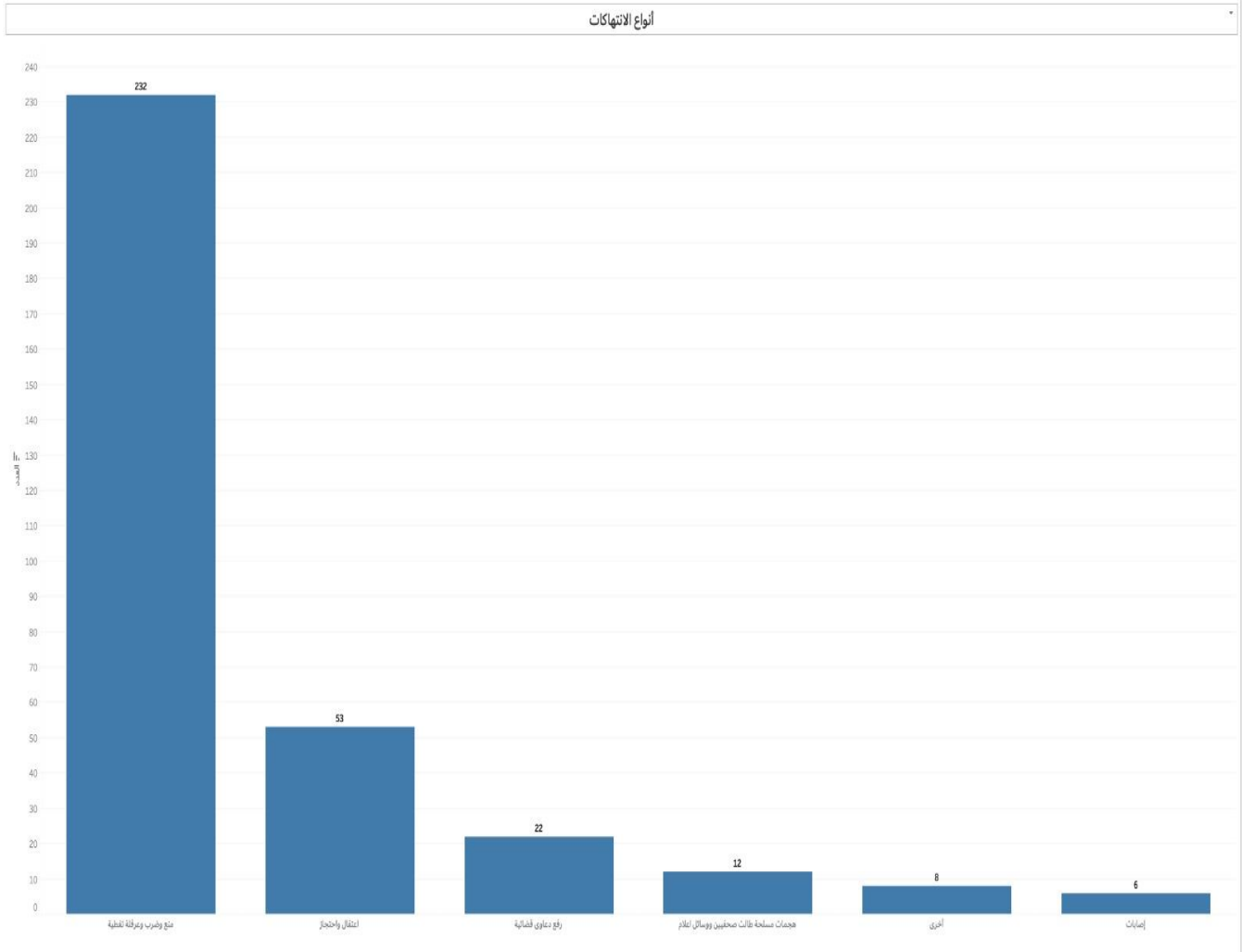
During the past months, according to monitoring conducted by the association, the month of April recorded the highest number of violations with (56) cases, followed by the month of August with (47) cases, from the total number of violations during the year.

Regarding the provinces, Baghdad ranked the highest among cities with the most violations against journalists with (66) cases, followed by Erbil with (64) cases, then Basra with (54) cases.

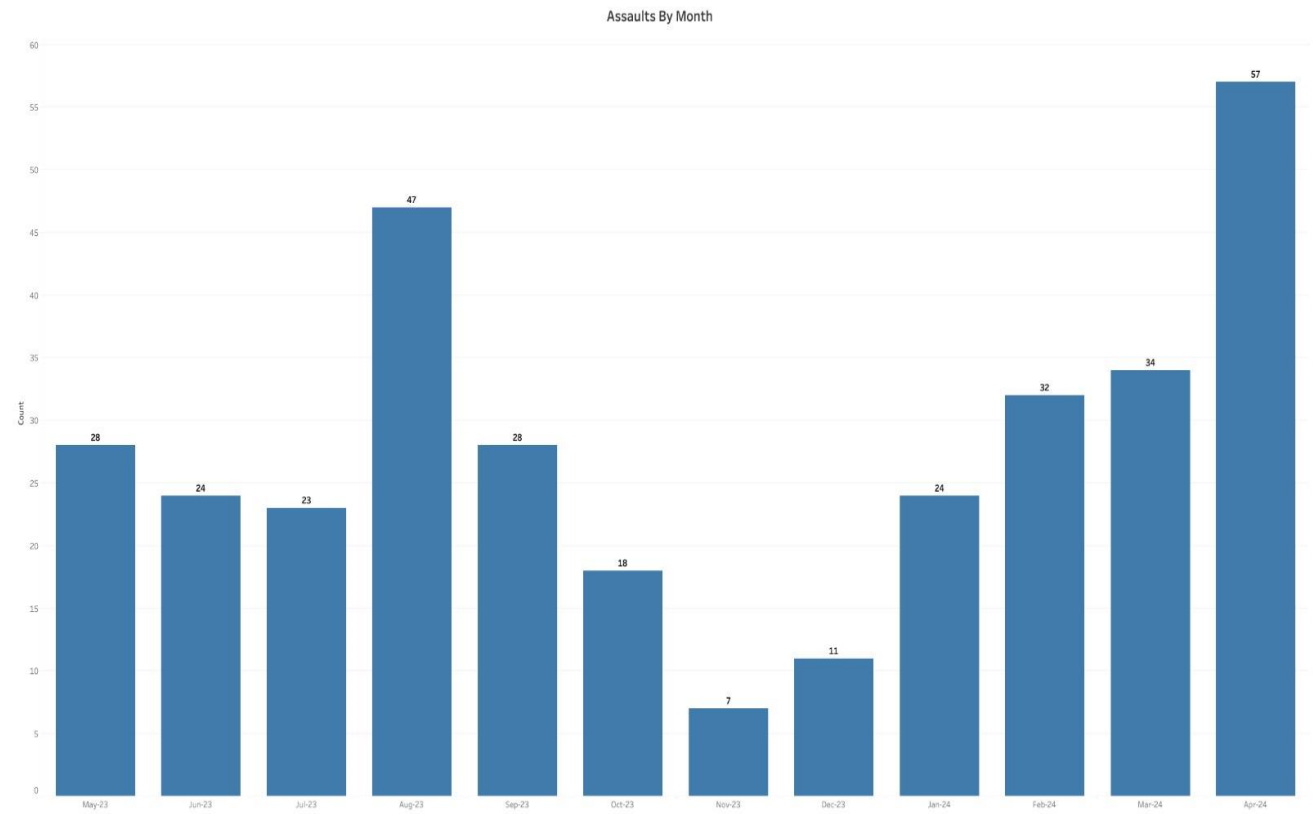
## **Violations in Numbers**

<b>Violations</b>	<b>Total</b>
Arrests and detentions	<b>53</b>
Injuries	<b>6</b>
Armed attacks	<b>12</b>
Physical assaults, obstruction and prevention	<b>232</b>
Lawsuits, warrants and sentences	<b>22</b>
Others	<b>8</b>

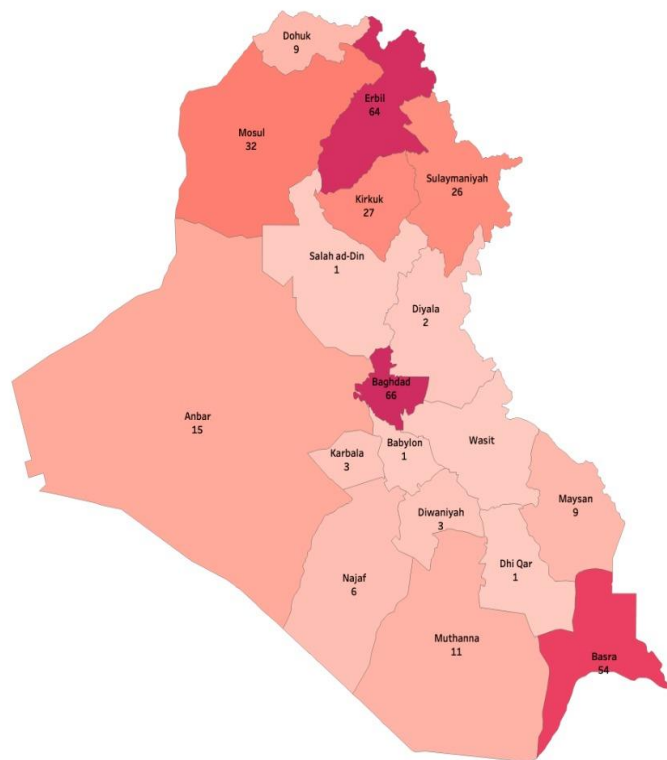
# Statistics of violations against journalists during 2024



# Monthly statistics of violations against journalists in 2024



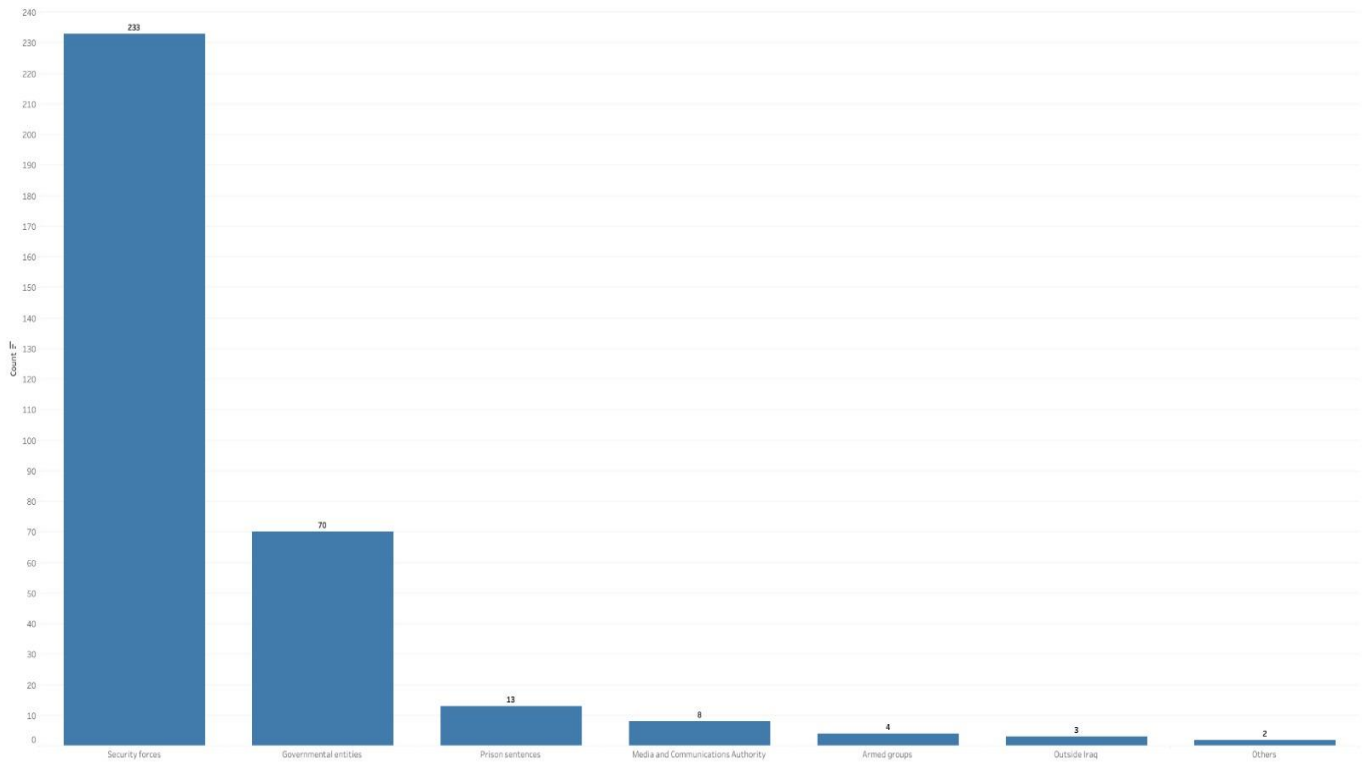
## Statistics of violations against Journalists during 2024 according to Provinces





# Statistics of the sides that violated Iraqi Journalists in 2024

Assault By Responsible Entity



# Narrative

## Arrests and Detention

-On May 7, 2023, the Asayish detained NRT channel correspondent Karim Kafi in Shikhan Police Station to prevent him from covering news. His equipment were confiscated and he was only released after a written pledge ; not to perform any coverage activity in the area.

- On May 16, 2023, the Basra Investigative Court detained TV host Haider Al-Hamdani after his appearance in court due to two lawsuits filed by Basra Governor Asaad Al-Edani for airing a video discussing the corruption that was related to the advertising prices for Gulf 25. The court imposed a bail of 60 million Iraqi dinars for his release.

- On May 27, 2023, security forces in Sulaymaniyah detained three journalists (Rudaw channel correspondent and cameraman Arkhan Ali and Alan Osman, and Biyam channel correspondent and cameraman Ramiar Osman and Jihad Abdul Rahman, and NRT channel correspondent and cameraman Kuran Luqman and Kozin Kamran) to prevent them from covering a protest in Piramgoran area, seizing their equipment.

- On June 9, 2023, a security officer in Basra detained Al-Ittihad channel correspondent Maher Al-Rubaie inside a gas station, physically assaulted him with the help of two policemen, and seized his equipment to erase the footage.

- On June 15, 2023, Jordanian authorities detained "Alshahid= the witness" program host Hamid Abdullah following a non-judicial complaint lodged by one of the defendants in the "Century Theft" case named "Luay Al-Tamimi," after the journalist revealed in an article that one of the defendants purchased luxury properties in Amman with large sums of money, with the complaint initiated from Baghdad.

- On July 20, 2023, Baghdad security forces arrested Reuters cameramen Ahmed Saad and Maher Al-Mashhadani, and AP cameraman Hadi Mazban, taking them to the Green Zone Police Station. They brutally assaulted DPA cameraman Amir Al-Mohammedawi, breaking his camera lens, and released him without returning his equipment, to prevent them from capturing moments of the Swedish embassy's invasion by protesters.

- On July 21, 2023, security forces in Duhok detained journalist Omid Baroshki for criticizing the court's decision to extend the detention of his colleague, journalist Shirwan Shirwani.

- On July 25, 2023, security elements detained NRT channel correspondent Omid Jumani and cameraman Kuran Abdul Khaliq in Erbil to prevent them from covering a protest against water shortages, releasing them after signing a written pledge not to cover the protest again.

- On August 3, 2023, security agencies in Erbil detained NRT channel team consisting of correspondent Murad Ahmed and cameraman Shirwan Mowlood at the city's police station to prevent them from covering a protest in one of Erbil's popular markets, confiscating their equipment and releasing them after about an hour.
- On August 10, 2023, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani's security detained crews from INews, Dijlah, Al-Sharqiya, Al-Janoub, Al-Furat, and the Iraqi News Agency, including Hanan Al-Quraishi, Ali Jabbar, Adad Al-Maksousi, Ahmed Al-Sadkhani, Haider Al-Husseini, Aws Al-Anzi, Hassan Issa, Ahlam Al-Abboudi, Mustafa Al-Badawi, to prevent them from covering the Sudani's opening of the Turkish Hospital in Maysan.
- On August 14, 2023, Basra police detained Al-Taghyir channel correspondent Mustafa Al-Shammari and cameraman Ahmed Daa, and INews channel correspondent Fuad Al-Hilfi to prevent them from covering a protest in front of an oil company gate.
- On August 23, 2023, Erbil security elements detained Walat Media and Ista correspondents; Diyar Hussein and Yasser Mohammed, along with their cameraman, and seized their equipment to erase footage of a protest organized by residents of Bahari Nui neighborhood protesting against water grid encroachment.
- On August 24, 2023, security forces detained Speeda channel office manager, Islam Kashani in Zakho, and took him to an unknown location after he posted a video criticizing the policy of Kurdistan Democratic Party leader Masoud Barzani.
- On September 1, 2023, security detained Al-Fallujah channel cameraman; Ali Ahmed for more than half an hour during his coverage of the return of visitors from the Arbaeen pilgrimage to Basra, claiming that he didn't have a permission to film in public places, releasing him after a series of negotiations.
- On September 3, 2023, security elements in Kirkuk detained KNN channel journalists Eugene Ramadan and Sherzad Hassan for over two hours inside an army vehicle during their coverage of protests in Kirkuk, releasing them after demanding they leave the area immediately.
- On October 29, 2023, Kurdistan Security detained Ruz News Agency correspondent Sleiman Ahmed at the Fishkhabour gate adjacent to the Syrian border, upon his return from South Kurdistan, taking him to an unknown destination for unknown reasons.
- On January 22, 2024, the National Security Agency in Diwaniyah detained Al-Mada newspaper correspondent Daa Mahja and took him to the agency's building after he published a document issued by the Criminal Evidence Department of the Ministry of Interior, indicating that the fire at the Women and Children Hospital in Diwaniyah resulted from an electrical fault, while security authorities previously announced the arrest of four youths accused of being involved in the incident.

- On February 5, 2024, security in Erbil arrested Standar News website correspondent Diako Hussein to prevent him from covering a demonstration organized by the Communist Party demanding the payment of delayed salaries to Kurdistan Region employees.

- On February 15, 2024, security forces in Sulaymaniyah detained Jet Media Foundation correspondent and cameraman Barwa Abdul Rahman and Barham Sadiq to prevent them from covering a protest condemning what they called the February 15 conspiracy. The crew was only released after more than five hours of detention and negotiations.

- On March 4, 2024, Ruz News Agency announced that the regional authorities insist on not disclosing the charges against their detained correspondent Sleiman Ahmed, who was arrested at a border crossing with Syria in October 2023, and refused to reveal his place of detention or allow meetings with his family.

-On March 24, 2024, the judge of the Shirqat Court ordered the imprisonment of Al-Ghad Radio correspondent Saleh Mahdi Al-Jumaili following a lawsuit filed against him by the Shirqat District Commissioner Ali Al-Shuaibi for capturing photos of sewage overflow in the district. Despite the journalist filing a lawsuit against the commissioner for seizing his equipment while documenting the area's flooding and being assaulted by his guards, the court dealt with him according to Article 438; a legislation inherited from the previous regime, which prohibits secret filming, and ignored the lawsuit against the district commissioner.

- On March 25, 2024, security in Sulaymaniyah detained NRT cameraman Marwan Faridon, Westkey News Agency's Oras Jabbar, Ira New Agency's Amjad Abdullah, and Mic Foundation's Krivan Farman from covering protests by teachers demanding the localization of their salaries. Additionally, they prevented the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty crew from filming the protesters, forcing them to delete the footage they captured during the protests.

- On April 24, 2024, the security of Planning Minister Mohammed Tameem detained Al-Ahd Channel team consisting of correspondent Mohammed Al-Farid and cameraman Saif Ali for over an hour, confiscated their camera to erase a video showing security personnel assaulting the correspondent to prevent him from speaking with the minister about their expulsion from covering the General Population Census conference.

### **Armed Attacks and Raiding Journalists' homes or Media bodies.**

-On June 8, 2023, Sulaymaniyah police raided the home of Diplomatic Media Foundation correspondent Bashdar Abu Bakr Bazzani and took him to a police station, where they detained him for over ten hours due to a lawsuit filed against him by the leader of the Islamic Kurdistan Justice Group, Ali Babir, after he prepared a journalistic report revealing suspicions of corruption involving the political bureau of the movement.

- On August 24, 2023, security forces in Zakho, Dohuk, raided the house of Speeda Channel's office manager, Islam Kashani, and ransacked the contents of the house without any search

nor seizure warrant. Kashani was in detention at the time due to his publication of a video criticizing Massoud Barzani, the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

- On October 4, 2023, supporters of the Sadrist Movement stormed the office of Al-Baghdadia Channel after organizing a protest in front of the building located in the Abu Nuwas area of central Baghdad. They closed the office and tampered with its contents in the presence of security forces, protesting against remarks made by the channel's program presenter, Ali Al-Dhubhawi, which the Sadrist supporters deemed offensive to their leader.

- On October 20, 2023, a security force raided the office of Kirkuk News Agency and arrested the site's director, Delir Droush, and three other journalists, including Iskandar Abdul Khaliq, Majid Mohammed, and Mohammed Qassim. The agency's equipment was seized after the website revealed corruption files associated with the Kirkuk governorate and local government.

- On December 3, 2023, followers of the Sadrist Movement attempted to storm the building of Al-Sumaria Channel and Al-Sumaria News Agency in the Karrada area of central Baghdad due to the agency's publication of a news story considered offensive to their leaders. After negotiations and an official apology from Al-Sumaria, published on the channel and agency's website, the protesters withdrew, while the agency decided to dismiss the editor from his position.

- On December 19, 2023, unidentified gunmen set fire to the headquarters of NRT Channel in Kirkuk late at night, causing severe damage to the building's facade. Kirkuk police confirmed that the incident was deliberate and accompanied by rioting and gunfire following the announcement of the results of the provincial council elections.

- On February 22, 2024, a security force raided the home of Rasti Media Foundation's director, Omeed Parwaisi, and took him to Zarka Prison in Dohuk due to his criticism of the government's administration and regional policy. This arrest marks the fifth for the journalist, who had previously spent two years in prison on fabricated charges.

- On February 22, 2024, the head of Al-Mada Media, Culture, and Arts Foundation, Fakhri Karim, survived an assassination attempt near the Presidential Square in Baghdad carried out by unidentified gunmen who intercepted his car and opened fire, causing significant damage to his vehicle.

- On April 21, 2024, a security force in Thi Qar raided the home of France-Press correspondent Asaad Al-Niyazi to arrest him due to a lawsuit filed against him by the French consul in Thi Qar, Adel Al-Kenzawi, for transmitting images of the 2021 French Embassy fire incident.

## Injuries:

-On September 3, 2023, three journalists and a cameraman sustained minor injuries in Kirkuk; Haider Awda, a correspondent for "Syria Today" channel, Rokan Jaf, a correspondent for "Ava News" channel, and Alexander Abdul Khaliq Amin, a correspondent, and Firas Abdullah, a cameraman for "Kirkuk News" website. The incident occurred during clashes with the army and the ensuing stampede while dispersing protesters following widespread protests in Kirkuk. The protests erupted due to the conflict over the return of control of the Kurdistan Democratic Party on a headquarters it occupied before the Iraqi army took control of it in 2017.

- On October 14, 2023, two cameramen Thaer Al-Sudani and Maher Al-Mushhadani, working for Reuters, sustained minor injuries from shrapnel as a result of Israeli shelling in southern Lebanon. The shelling targeted the agency's vehicle they were traveling in, forcing them to return to Baghdad.

## Physical Assault, Obstruction and Denial from Coverage

- On May 11, 2023, federal police in Kirkuk prevented the journalist and cameraman of zoom TV, Rokan Mahmoud and Karzan Kakah Basha, from covering a mass grave inside the Bakara Base in Kirkuk, and completely erased the footage from their camera.

- On May 12, 2023, security forces in Nineveh prohibited all media outlets from covering Prime Minister Mohammed Shiaa Al-Sudani's visit to the province. They prevented Mohammed Al-Abbasi, cameraman for "Hona Baghdad" satellite channel, and Saad Mansour, a correspondent and Mahmoud Hazem; a cameraman for "INews," from performing their duties, as well as five other journalistic teams.

- On May 16, 2023, the security official at the Dijla Village building in Baghdad prevented Ali Al-Amiri, a correspondent, and his cameraman

from "Al-Rashid" channel, from covering the Golden Crescent ceremony honoring artists inside the village building.

- On May 24, 2023, Sulaymaniyah police prevented, Jalal Mohammed and Omeed Yassin, correspondent and cameraman from "Ronmedia" news site from completing their work on a report about speed cameras and fines for violators, and seized their equipment to delete the footage.
- On June 12, 2023, Dohuk police seized the equipment of Baryar Neriwi and Adel Sabri, correspondent and cameraman from "Nrt" channel, and completely destroyed it to prevent them from covering a demonstration by car showroom owners in Dohuk.
- On June 17, 2023, the Prime Minister's security prevented satellite TV crews from "Zagros, Al-Sumaria, A News, Al-Ghadeer, Al-Ahd, Al-Fallujah, Al-Jazeera, UTV, Diwan, Al-Hurra," from covering the "Iraqi Press Day" ceremony that was held at the Rashid Hotel. The ceremony was attended by the head of the Journalists Syndicate.
- On June 25, 2023, members of the heritage houses Restoration company in Basra prevented the crews of "Al-Iraqiya, Al-Marbad, Al-Janoobia, Wtv channels and the radios of Basra's Voice and Shanashil," from filming the opening ceremony of the restored houses attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Culture and a representative from the United Nations/UNESCO.
- On July 8, 2023, Dohuk police refused to return the equipment of "Rast Media" media foundation, which included three desktop computers, a fourth laptop, a camera and its accessories, and other devices confiscated during the raid on the institution's building and the arrest of its director in April 2023.
- On July 15, 2023, the Prime Minister's security prohibited all media outlets from covering Mohammed Al-Sudani's visit to Muthanna province, and the provincial council issued instructions based on orders from security to prevent any media outlet from covering the visit.

- On July 16, 2023, Sunni Endowment officials seized the equipment of Al-Fallujah channel's cameraman Hamza Fares after he covered a conference inaugurated by Sunni Endowment head Mishaan Al-Khazraji, in which he incorrectly recited Quranic verses, and they confiscated the equipment to delete the camera's recordings.
- On July 16, 2023, a security officer with four security personnel assaulted Ahmed Fahd, "Al-Rabea" channel cameraman, to prevent him from covering a match between Basra Oil and Industry teams, inside the City Sports Stadium in Basra. The officer detained the cameraman before several interventions were made to finally release him.
- On July 23, 2023, the office manager of the Sumer Operations Command prevented Saad Al-Rikabi, correspondent of Al-Fallujah channel in Dhi Qar from performing his duties at a security conference, after being threatened to break his journalistic equipment and arrest him if he insisted on covering the conference.
- On August 3, 2023, security in Erbil prevented Nbez Rashad and Hussein Farhad, correspondent and cameraman of "Westgate News," from covering a protest organized by poultry breeders protesting the import of eggs from neighboring countries. The crew was subjected to a torrent of abuse while preparing their equipment for filming.
- On August 7, 2023, Kirkuk police raided the filming sites of various journalistic teams, including Rudaw, Bas News, Kirkuk Alaan, NRT, Speeda, and Wash News, to prevent them from covering a demonstration in front of the Antiquities Department.
- On August 15, 2023, Asayish forces in Erbil seized the equipment of five journalistic crews, including Biryavan Mahdi, a correspondent for "Baz Media," Blien Haji and Rizbaz Ahmed from "Khur Media" agency, Mohammed Khosrow from "Kurdistan Press" channel, Sirbaz Ahmed from "Jamawer TV" institution, and Surat Karim and Hakim Mam Rash from "Khwakurk Media" agency, preventing them from covering a conference for the Peshmerga, threatening them with arrest and imprisonment if they published anything about the conference.



- On August 26, 2023, members of the security at Khoormal Hospital in Halabja district seized the camera of Speeda colleague Shawan Saeed and deleted the photos documenting injuries of the victims from a traffic accident in the area.
  
- On September 2, 2023, a security element in Kirkuk obstructed the crew of "KNN" channel from filming. Correspondent Ogen Ramadan and cameraman Mohamed Wahab, were covering a demonstration organized by the educational staff in the province demanding payment of their overdue wages.
  
- On October 13, 2023, elements from the Anbar police prevented the crew of "Turkmen Eli" channel; correspondent Mustafa Al-Salhi and his cameraman, from passing through the checkpoint to enter Tal Afar district to record a special episode about the provincial council elections.
  
- on 14/10/2023 the security forces in Basra prevented the correspondent of "Iraq 24" channel, Younis Ali, and his colleague, cameraman Ali Al-Massi, from carrying out their duties in "Kut Al-Hajaj" Street due to traffic congestion, and they were required to obtain authorization from the Basra Police Chief to allow them to film; the policeman revealed the instructions issued by the Basra Police Chief in this regard.
  
- On 16/10/2023, the Media and Communications Authority banned all media outlets from hosting political analyst Ahmed Al-Abadi, describing his statements as "threatening to the democratic system in the country," warning all media outlets that legal consequences and penalties would follow such act.
  
- On 18/10/2023, riot police prevented Ali Jasim and Diaa Numan , "Al-Ahd" channel crew; from covering a demonstration condemning the bombing that targeted a hospital in Gaza, in Tahrir Square in Baghdad,.
  
- On 24/11/2023, security in Al-Mutanabbi Street prevented the correspondent of "Al-Baghdadiya" channel, Ramy Al-Hamdani, and his cameraman from carrying

out their duties, due to orders issued by the Baghdad Police Command in cooperation with the Media and Communications Authority, indicating a ban on "Al-Baghdadiya" channel from filming in Al-Mutanabbi Street.

- On 28/11/2023, Basra police continued to demand journalists to obtain security approvals before filming anywhere in the province, accordingly, "Al-Ahd" correspondent and cameraman, Fadel Al-Battat and Mohammed Mufid, were prevented from filming on the Basra Corniche.

- On 29/11/2023, the Minister of Education, Ibrahim Namis Al-Jubouri, issued a decision banning all media from entering educational buildings or schools and filming inside them, without obtaining authorization exclusively from the ministry. The decision was reached on the background of his inspection visit to the construction of schools under the Chinese loan project in Al-Karkh First and Third sectors in Baghdad.

- On 2/12/2023, security forces in Anbar prevented the crew of Al-Itijah channel (correspondent Qatada Adel and his cameraman Mohammed Al-Khatir) from covering the market in Ramadi, requiring the crew to obtain approval exclusively from the Anbar Police Chief for filming.

- On 30/12/2023, riot police brutally attacked Mohammed Iyad and Ali Khalid, the correspondents of "One News" and "INews" channels, using batons and electric sticks. The violators smashed their equipment while covering a match between Al-Minaa and Karbala teams at Karbala International Stadium.

- On 10/1/2024, the protection of the Prime Minister banned the media from covering the opening ceremony of the 47th Baghdad International Fair, after a security element from the protection force stormed the filming site of Al-Rashid channel, ending the coverage made by the cameraman, Adi Fawzi. They prevented 5 other press crews from filming as well.

-On 16/1/2024, a security member prevented correspondent Maher Al-Harbi and cameraman Assad Youssef of "Al-Oula" channel, from covering a demonstration in Basra, threatening them with arrest and "tribal prosecution" if they continued to work.

-On 18/1/2024, the Media and Communications Authority imposed a ban on all media outlets from hosting political analyst "Imad Bajalan" for two months, and issued another letter to suspend the political program "Clearly" that was broadcasted on "Zagros" channel for one month for hosting personalities that are banned by the authority.

-On 20/1/2024, security elements in Sulaymaniyah prevented colleagues Zelia Ali and Bariar Mahmoud; the team of "Diplomatic Magazine" news agency, from covering a press conference held by protesting teachers in the "Zargata" neighborhood, threatening them with arrest if they filmed.

-On 21/1/2024, security forces in Sulaymaniyah prevented Lanya Bakhtiar and cameraman Oras Jabbar; team of "Westkah News" agency, from covering the ongoing protests of teaching staff in Sulaymaniyah, demanding payment of their financial dues.

-On 3/1/2024, a municipal employee in Diyala (named Ahmed Mahjoub) verbally attacked the correspondent of "Al-Taghyeer" channel in Diyala, Hassan Al-Shammari, during his coverage of the demolition of several houses in the area, and attempted to assault the correspondent, were it not for the intervention of bystanders at the scene.

-On 5/2/2024, the Anbar Provincial Council banned media outlets from entering the hall of the Provincial Council building and covering the consultations taking place to elect the new governor and his deputies, to form the local government.

-On 20/2/2024, the Media and Communications Authority directed all media outlets to ban hosting political analyst Yahya Al-Kubaisi, threatening with legal consequences upon violating this decision.

On 21/2/2024, security elements guarding the headquarters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Erbil prevented the correspondent of "Jamawar" channel from carrying out his duties in front of the building, threatening to break his equipment and arrest him if he filmed.

-On 24/2/2024, a security element prevented the correspondent and cameraman of "Al-Ahd" channel, Mohammed Al-Farid and Saif Ali, from carrying out their duties, requiring them to bring a letter from the Baghdad Operations Command to allow the crew to film in Al-Firdous Square in Baghdad.

-On 27/2/2024, the Asayish prevented the correspondent and photographer of "Voice of America" radio, Dyar Jamal and Kawa Kokol, from passing through the "Heran - Shikalawa" checkpoint towards the "Akre" district in Dohuk, and interrogated them for two continuous hours, then forced the correspondent to sign a written pledge to allow him to return to Sulaymaniyah.

-On 27/2/2024, the head of the Najaf Provincial Council, Hussein Al-Issawi, expelled the press teams from inside the council hall, including cameramen from Al-Taghyeer and Sumeria channels, Walid Marzah, Taha Al-Mousawi, and correspondents from Al-Rabea channel and "Al-Thikra News" agency, Tahsin Al-Sheikh and Ali Al-Khayyat, and the correspondent and cameraman of Utv channel, Hussam Al-Kaabi and Ahmed Al-Marjani, following a verbal altercation with his deputy, Gaith Shubaa, during the council session.

-On 5/3/2024, the Baghdad Provincial Council President, Amar Al-Qaisi, banned the crews of satellite channels "Sumeria, Fallujah, and Al-Ahd" (Muataz Jalil, Alaa Al-Hadidi, Ali Hussein, Hisham Salim, Sajjad Jafar, and Haider

Dalil) from covering his discussion session, despite the session being dedicated to discussing service issues and projects directly affecting the lives of citizens.

-On 5/3/2024, security forces in Basra prevented the crews of "Al-Rabea, Iraq 24, Al-Hurra, Al-Thamania, Muroo News Agency, and Al-Janoub Radio" channels from passing to Al-Faw district to cover a demonstration, demanding them to obtain official approvals exclusively from the Basra Operations Command to cover or film any activity or street in the province.

-On 27/3/2024, a security element from the Asayish banned the crew of the "Bawar News" agency (Nabaz Rashad and Idris Georges) from covering a demonstration of businessmen in Erbil. Their equipment was seized to force them to leave the site and stop their coverage at once.

-On 28/3/2024, the organizing committee for the opening ceremony of a street in Karbala province banned Zainab Al-Ali, the correspondent of Al-Taleea channel in Karbala, from coverage, claiming that her attire was inappropriate for the sanctity of the city, although she had published a video at the time in which she appeared wearing a veil that covers her entire body, and the video did not show anything disrespectful to the "holiness" of the province.

-On 29/3/2024, the head of the media network, Kareem Hammadi, ordered the employees of the Iraqi Media Network not to criticize government decisions and authority actions, and to remove Ann Salah, the host of the programs from Iraqi TV and transfer her to the radio, for her criticism in a tweet on social media about the rising prices and cost of living.

- on 31/3/2024, the correspondent of the "NRT" channel, colleague Muhammad Adnan, was assaulted by the security forces in the district of Kafri in Diyala, and all his equipment was destroyed, while covering the targeting of the sheikh of the "Bayat" tribe with a drone.

- on 7/4/2024, Nineveh journalists held a press conference, in which they complained about the continuous restrictions they are subjected to when

covering the governorate sessions despite their invitation, and the repeated expulsion immediately after the slightest disagreement between the members of the Council, which forces colleagues to wait for long hours outside the governorate building, to obtain the details of the sessions.

-On 8/4/2024, the security forces in Erbil attacked 7 press crews (Turkish Anatolia, Esta News, Standard News, Westga News, Bass Media, Bowar News Foundation) to prevent them from covering the fire in the second hand market, as well as seizing all their equipment to erase the recordings. Colleagues were also subjected to a torrent of insults and threats of arrest .

- on 8/4/2024 Security in Erbil prevented the NRT team, correspondent Hirsch Qadir and cameraman, Muhammad Ismail, from covering the disappearance of money at the Golan Bank in the Khabat district in Erbil, threatening them with arrest if filming resumed in the area.

-on 21/4/2024, The director of the Nineveh Governorate Office prevented a number of press crews (Mosul, Dijla, Al-Ahed, Fallujah, Al-Sumaria, Huna Baghdad, Hala FM, and NFM) from covering the visit of the head of the Martyrs Foundation, Abdul Ilah Al-Naeli, to the governorate building, and the media officer in the governorate removed all the "logos" from the platform, after demanding that colleagues leave immediately.

- on 22/4/2024, The Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate and the Protection of the President of the Regional Government prevented fellow journalists (Hirsh Qadir, Muhammad Ismail, Diako Hassan, Ayoub Ali Qadir, Ribaz Ahmed, Hazar Anwar, Nebz Rashad, Shaheen Fouad, Ahmed Shakhan, Taman Abdullah, Diyar Adel, Hawkar Hassan, Shawan Shirzad, Muhammad Yassin, Jilan Saber, Heman Mohammed, Diyar Hussein, Rabin Mohammed, Hisham Saeed, Nihad Ahmed) from entering the Rotana Hotel in Barbil to cover the anniversary of the Kurdish Press Day, despite the syndicate's invitation to the media. Through "press groups" to attend and cover the event.

### **Lawsuits, Court Senetences and Arrest Warrants**

- on 16/5/2023 Mahmoud al-Nuaimi, director of the Anbar news agency, has been attending court sessions for a year over a lawsuit filed against him by the

directors of police and rescue in Fallujah, accusing him of inciting demonstrations in the province.

-on 18/6/2023, The Supreme Judicial Council issued a decision to ban the journalist Qahtan Adnan from traveling, due to an unresolved lawsuit, filed by lawyer Ahmed Shaheed, who is close to the coordination framework, on the grounds of violating customs and laws.

-21/6/2023, Mustafa Al-Mayahi, a cameraman for Al-Ahed TV in Diwaniyah, reported that he is facing two lawsuits for publishing a video about a case of manipulating a property in Diwaniyah, and the journalist was detained during his appearance before the judiciary, and was released only after signing a financial bail.

- on 6/7/2023, The Karkh Investigation Court issued an arrest warrant against Qahtan Adnan, the presenter of programs on the "One News" channel, on the charge of "broadcasting media content contrary to public morals and customs".

- on 20/7/2023, The Erbil Court issued a new sentence to imprison journalist Sherwan Sherwani for 4 years, after ascribing two new charges against him, which are signing instead of one of his friends at the time of serving his sentence in prison, and impersonating another person, but the journalist told the court that the security officers in the detention center were forcing him to sign papers and books, without knowing their contents, The point went uninvestigated by court.

- on 13/8/2023, The Rusafa Criminal Court / First Commission referred the case of journalist Taghreed Al-Azzawi to the competent court to issue an arrest warrant against her, following a lawsuit filed against her by the Martyrs Foundation, in 2020, on charges of promoting the former regime, and the journalist left the country and settled in Jordan, fearing prosecution.

- on 19/8/2023, The Kurdistan authorities refused to release journalist Kohdar Zebari after the expiration of his sentence, and attached a new trumped-up charge against him, which is possession of his grandfather's weapon, which his family has kept since 1960 .

-on 3/10/2023, The Erbil Court issued a third sentence of three years in prison against journalist Kohdar Zebari, and the verdict was issued despite the fact that the journalist informed the court that the weapon does not belong to him and is not registered in his name, and it is only a hunting weapon and not military, but

the judge issued the verdict without the presence of witnesses or verifying the journalist's statements.

-On 8/11/2023, the Presidency of the Appeals of the Babylon Federal Court placed the correspondent of Dijlah TV, Ammar Al-Taie, in prison after issuing a two-month prison sentence, against the background of a lawsuit filed against him by the relatives of a family in Babylon, after the reporter revealed the theft of their sister's inheritance in the press report prepared by the reporter about a year ago.

-On 19/11/2023, WTV presenter Qusai Shafiq received a report of two lawsuits filed against him by Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani, in the competent Karkh Investigation Court, after he talked about employment in the Prime Minister's Office.

-on 3/12/2023, The Passports Directorate in Erbil refused to renew the passport of TV presenter Muhammad Jabbar, with a notice from the federal government in Baghdad, for the purpose of pressuring him to return to Baghdad in preparation for his arrest and trial, after lawsuits were filed against him, against the background of hosting a person who launched accusations and criticism against the judiciary, which prompted the Media and Communications Commission to stop his program (clearly), accompanied by pressure on the regional authorities that host the "Zagros" office, his workplace.

-on 14/12/2023, The judiciary referred the presenter of programs in "Al-Baghdadiya" Ali Al-Khayal to the Central Criminal Court for investigation, due to a lawsuit filed against him by Prime Minister Muhammad Shia Al-Sudani and submitted by the Central Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Agency, accusing the journalist of promoting the ideas of the Baath Party, through the programs he presents on Al-Baghdadia TV.

-on 8/1/2024, The correspondent of the "NRT" channel, Khaled Mohammed, appeared before the judiciary in the Koysinjaq District Court in Erbil Governorate, due to a lawsuit filed against him by the "Koysinjaq" Education Directorate, after he prepared a press report that revealed that a student was subjected to violence by a school principal in the district.

-on 30/1/2024, The House of Representatives filed a legal complaint against Al-Sharqiya TV and its presenter Hisham Ali, due to statements made by two



former deputies in his program "The Game of Chairs", who revealed cases of "harassment" within Parliament .

-on5/2/2024, The judiciary in Kalar dismissed a lawsuit filed since 2013 against Voice of America reporter Dilshad Anwar, by the Minister of Labor in the Kurdistan Regional Government, and a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Adnan Muhammad Qadir, after the journalist published a report on the seizure of lands inside the region by influential people in the magazine "Reel" in the same year, in addition to the journalist's exposure to great pressure, after the former minister demanded a bail of 250 million dinars.

- on 22/2/2024, The Third Karkh Investigation Court placed the presenter of the "Nine" studio program, Ali Al-Thabhawi, in prison for three days, upon his arrival at the court building, after being informed of 3 lawsuits against him, filed by the Chief of Staff of the Army, Lieutenant General Abdul Amir Yara Allah, General Othman Al-Ghanmi, former Minister of Interior, and Thabet Al-Abbasi, the current Minister of Defense, because of a video clip published in the program, in which a retired Major General appeared talking about his grievances, and although the video was widespread on Social media, before it was published in Baghdadiya, the authorities arrested al-Dhubhawi, and he was released on bail of 10 million dinars.(7,700\$)

- on 28/2/2024 The producer and presenter of programs in WTV channel, Qusai Shafiq appeared in the Karrada Court due to a lawsuit filed against him by the politician Khamis Al-Khanjar, demanding compensation for the journalist's publication of a land acquisition case in the Green Zone under the pretext of investment, and the judiciary dismissed the lawsuit because it lacked the legal basis.

- on 12/3/2024, The Rusafa Crime Court issued a one-year prison sentence on the same presenter, for transmitting an appeal of a poor family, and suspending the execution of the sentence, provided that the journalist is committed for three years to show good behavior and stop publishing, as well as signing a written pledge to the court, and paying financial insurance to the court's fund, and the ruling seemed strange in the history of publishing and media cases .

- on 14/4/2024, The Rusafa Investigation Court issued a recruitment order against the presenter of programs in the channel "eNews" Amal Ali, because of a lawsuit filed against her by MP of the Kurdistan Democratic Party Mahma

Khalil, after criticizing his failure to attend the episode of her program two years ago, when she was working in another channel, and against the background of that, she was prevented from entering the House of Representatives building, and also the initiation of the lawsuit two years after the incident seemed strange.

-On 14/4/20 Al-Karkh Crime Court issued a two-year prison sentence in absentia against the presenter Qahtan Adnan without informing him of the attendance or notifying the recruitment order, against the background of a lawsuit filed against him by the Minister of Immigration, Ivan Fayek, for revealing corruption charges in the case of buying ice, with large sums, and the judiciary issued the verdict despite the fact that the case is being investigated by the Integrity Commission.

- on 18/4/2024, The judiciary dismissed a lawsuit filed against Dijlah TV presenter Sahar Abbas Jameel, by the Director General of the Roads and Bridges Department, Hussein Al-Sharmouti, for presenting corruption files and what relates to manipulating public money.

#### Others :

-9/8/2023, The head of the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate, "Azad Hama Amin", canceled the membership of Muhammad Fateh, the news editor at "Nawa" Radio from the syndicate, against the background of publishing the details of belonging to the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, on the grounds that the journalist belongs to two similar syndicates, while the journalist denied that.

-on 1/12/2023, The Iraqi government blocked the "Ultra Iraq" news website for unknown reasons, outside government valid contexts without notifying the blocked medium, in addition to the fact that the category of the news site does not belong to terrorist organizations, and pornographic sites that the Ministry of Communications announced blocked, and the government did not provide any explanation for this procedure.

- on 3/12/2023, The management of the "Al-Sumaria News" agency dismissed an editor from work, because he published a press release in the agency that supporters of the Sadrist movement considered offensive to their leaders, as well as the dismissal of another editor after he objected to the dismissal of his colleague from the agency.

-on 9/1/2024, The House of Representatives imposed on journalists a specific uniform, as a condition for entering the parliament building, and to prevent violators of this directive from entering the House.

- on 17/2/2024, The authorities of the Kurdistan Region stipulated that the journalist who was sentenced to prison, "Kohdar Zebari", should not return to his journalistic work, and should stop criticizing the authority on social media, as a condition before his release from prison, after he had ended his sentence that lasted more than three years.

-on 22/2/2024, The Iraqi government blocked "Hudoud" website in the southern and central regions of the country through the portals of "Earthlink" Internet Company, without announcing the reasons for the blocking, a procedure not conducted according to official government contexts, nor was the blocked site admins notified, in addition to the fact that the site is classified as satirical news sites that the Ministry of Communications did not announce in its black list; neither a terrorist organizations or a pornographic site.

- on 20/3/2024 The Media and Communications Commission issued a decision to block the news center's website, calling on the National Security to take the necessary measures to do so, without the commission referring to the content of the violating materials, or mentioning the exact reasons for this procedure, which came against the background of a letter sent by the President of the Federal Court to the President of the Republic regarding a group via the application "WhatsApp" managed by a number of those in charge of the news center's website.

### **Conclusion:**

The above figures indicate a methodology aimed at reducing the already low ceiling of freedom of journalistic work, after the ruling forces imposed almost absolute control over all independent bodies and entities whose own decisions are guaranteed by the constitution.

It also shows the magnitude of the violations committed by the Media and Communications Commission, the rulers' egotism to dictate the independent government bodies, and the Commission's surrender to their desires to suppress press freedoms, and even went to the extent where it would block press groups

and pages through social networking sites, and impose guardianships on the media to prevent the emergence of figures with an opinion opposing to the authority or the regime.

This is accompanied by intimidation, abuse and exclusion, and enrooting a state of terror in the hearts of journalists who seek to exercise their normal duties, which aims to subject most journalists to what the authority seeks, in the process of glorifying it, exaggerating its achievements, and seizing to oppose any of its acts .

The violations also show the increase in the number of lawsuits, the increase in sentences issued against journalists against whom lawsuits have been filed, as well as cases of detention for days in police stations, and the treatment of publishing cases as crimes against national security and the current political system, which confirms the use of the judiciary as a tool to bring journalists to their knees and silence opponents.

The continued armed attacks of killing, threats, displacement and torture of journalists are a recognized consequence of the intention of procrastination in pursuing criminals and moving the file of ending impunity, which Iraq has been lagging behind in activating for more than two decades.

The security services chased journalists in cities and streets, beating them and breaking their equipment, for fear of transferring the on ground events to public opinion, which shows the face of reactionary, authoritarian and submissive governments, which do not work in accordance with the constitution and international agreements, charters and treaties.

All this opened the way to the practice of arbitrariness and the issuance of individual decisions, unconstitutional, after the issuance of a series of decisions aimed at excluding and hiding the emergence of dissenting voices.

The government has gone so far as to block news and satirical websites, demonstrating the extent to which it adheres to the dictatorial contexts of previous eras.

This approach indicates the authority's continuous efforts to end the existence of any space for freedom of expression or journalistic work contrary to the aspirations of the controllers, by adopting the official government discourse, and suppressing the other opinion.

At the legislative level, the parliament still refrains from discussing the draft law on the right to access information with direct stakeholders, and occasionally publishes chronic bills, which have already been rejected by the Iraqi street, with the aim of procrastinating those demanding the passage of the right to information law.

The Iraqi Council of Representatives also amended one of the most prominent legal articles in publishing crimes within the Iraqi Penal Code, which caused hundreds of journalists to be dragged to the courts, and amended the sentence of imprisonment only from 7 to 5 years. This confirms the ability of the Iraqi legislator to amend laws inherited from the previous dictatorial era, but deliberately keep them, to harmonize with the methodology of the ruling parties that need these laws to suppress freedoms.

Amid all this regression, a state of silence is observed by the UN and international organizations monitoring the level of democracy, freedom of expression, the press and human rights in general in Iraq, which indicates the existence of an agreement between authoritarian parties that do not carry democratic behaviors, and these organizations that have been operating in Iraq for two decades, motivated by monitoring the progress of the democratic process and the reality of human rights, as they have been interested in the reality of human rights and freedom of journalistic work over the past years, but they are strangely silent about these noticeable practices that suppress the freedom of journalistic work.

### **Recommendations:**

Based on the above, the Press Freedom Advocacy Association (PFAA) submits its recommendations to the House of Representatives and international organizations concerned with human rights, freedom of expression and the press:

- 1 -Reviving the Media and Publications Court, which was established under the recommendations of UPR, and was abolished by the Supreme Judicial Council in 2017 due to the lack of a supporting law.

2 -The courts abide by the recommendations of the Judicial Council regarding publishing cases, and not to consider them as criminal offenses.

3 -The House of Representatives should carry out its tasks in reforming the legal system, protecting the freedom of journalistic work, and approving a fair law on the right to access information, and the law on the plurality of unions and federations.

4 -The Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces fulfills his promises to protect journalists from the oppression and violence of the security services, hold accountable the order issuers of the operations and police commanders doing so to suppress journalists according to personal whims, and to refrain from making commitments that are not upheld.

5 -The need for the federal government to pressure the regional authority to release journalists detained in Kurdistan prisons, and to reconsider the fabricated charges against them.

6 -Isolating the Media and Communications Commission from political decisions and moods, and keeping it away from the system of repression followed by the authorities.

7 -The Commission should carry out its tasks in strengthening the role of independent press and media institutions, and stop imposing guardianship on the media.

8 -Serious work on the file of ending impunity for crimes committed against journalists, and revealing the parties and personalities who committed assassinations, disappearances and kidnappings against journalists.

9- Opening an investigation into the illegal blocking of news agencies or websites, and holding the personalities or parties behind this accountable.