

Monitoring Report of the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum (IWJF): the reality of press freedom in Iraq for the period from May 4, 2021, to May 3, 2022.

World Press Freedom Day is an opportunity to remind the Iraqis and the world in general of the importance of the safety and protection of press freedom prescribed by the Universal Declaration of human rights as a fundamental human right, as well as guaranteed by the Iraqi constitution through Article 38.

The period from May 4, 2021, to May 3, 2022, have witnessed high rates of violence against journalists in Iraq continuously, among the local and foreign media, and diverse cases of repression, imprisonment, threats, assassination attempts, closure of institutions, extortion, and defamation of journalists of different cities of Iraq, which was a hindrance to practice job duties of their profession.

In addition to that, some governmental and non-governmental parties have also restricted media freedom by preventing journalists from covering important events or obtaining information, particularly with regard to demonstrations and sit-ins, with an escalation of targeting them via social media.

The report, prepared by the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum, reported more than 100 cases of targeting journalists and media institutions, including 26 cases of threats, harassment, defamation, bullying, and extortion of Iraqi women journalists. Some of whom were mentioned by their names in the report, while others have requested not to be named for security and personal reasons.

The report also noted a further decline in freedom of expression and media in Kurdistan region and some of the disputed cities.

The following is the list of the most major cases recorded during the year:

#	Date	Case
1	10/05/2021	Mysterious assassination attempt targeted (AlFurat) Channel reporter, Ahmed Hassan, by unidentified gunman.
2	16/05/2021	The detention of the editor-in-chief of the magazine (diplomacy), Hemin Bager, in Sulaymaniyah.
3	18/05/2021	The Storming of MBC Iraq office by angry groups on the account of some contents that considered inappropriate and violate Iraqi values and symbols.
4	21/05/2021	A female journalist was assaulted and insulted by a security officer when travelled to Maysan province.
5	22/05/2021	Journalist Haider Hadi was sued in Karbala for broadcasting a video report on the infrastructure and waste of resources occurring in reconstruction and maintenance projects.
6	31/05/2021	The evacuation of the headquarters of (Altagheer) channel in Baghdad on the account of receiving threats to kill its employees.
7	05/06/2021	The cameraman of (Hona Baghdad) channel, Mohammed al-

		Taie, was arrested and beaten severely by the security forces in Mosul.
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8	06/06/2021	Minister of Agriculture banned (AlMarbad) radio correspondent, Ahmed Ali, from performing his work in Basra.
9	10/06/2021	Prevent media from covering a press conference inside the Kirkuk education building.
10	12/06/2021	A Security force beat the reporter (Fouad al-Hilfi) from the (i News) channel inside Basra Teaching Hospital.
11	30/06/2021	Duhok court sentenced the photojournalist, Kahraman Shoukry, to seven years in prison.
12	06/07/2021	The (Tigris) channel reporter, Rasem al-Saidi, was detained and beaten severely by a security force in Dhi Qar.
13	13/07/2021	A security force raided RT channel office and arrested its correspondent in Baghdad, Ashraf Azzawi, for unknown reasons, then released him after 5 hours of detention.
14	13/07/2021	Mass Media were shut down in Sulaimaniyah, and journalists were arrested as members of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) raided the headquarters of (I Plus) Kurdish channel, which was still in the process of its test broadcasts online.
15	24/07/2021	The detention of Al-Hurra TV correspondent, Haider Hadi, in Karbala.
16	27/07/2021	Intelligence agents, and Media and Communications Commission employees shut down Al-baghdadiya channel, arrested the presenter, Ali al-dhahhawi, and the head of the news department, Taha Khalil, then released them after 24 hours.
17	28/07/2021	The bodyguards of the speaker of the Parliament attacked the crew of (Rasheed, Mosul, eastern, Turkmen, Nineveh now) channels in Mosul.
18	09/08/2021	Security forces in Dhi Qar banned the correspondent of NRT channel, Mahmoud Fayyad, from covering an event.
19	10/08/2021	Security officer prohibited the staff of alsharqiya news channel from covering the explosion of electricity towers in Kirkuk.
20	18/08/2021	A force from the "Bakka" attacked the crew of the (Rudaw) channel, shattered their vehicle, and confiscated their equipment in Sinjar.
21	04/09/2021	Journalist Ali Fadhel's house was targeted by a stun grenade in Diyala.
22	05/09/2021	Security forces detained five journalists while covering security events in the village of "Shaal" in Kirkuk.

23	12/09/2021	President of Dhi Qar University, Dr. Yahya Al-Khafaji, prohibited the media from covering the demonstration of professors occurred in the university campus.
24	25/09/2021	Journalist, Jehan al-Taie, was harassed by the director of the Office of the head of the Iraqi media network.
25	13/10/2021	Security officer prohibited (Al-Ghadeer) Channel staff from covering the conference of announcing the results of counting and sorting in Baghdad.
26	17/10/2021	Journalist Omid Proshki received a third- degree sentence for attempted “destabilization”in Dohuk.
27	20/10/2021	Riot police banned media from covering a protest in Kirkuk.
28	20/10/2021	Some parties impersonate the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum and use its name to organize fake media activities.
29	29/10/2021	Gunmen break into UTV channel and threaten to set fire to the channel's office on the account of hosting a political figure.
30	6/11/2021	The attack against Al Jazeera crew caused bruises and injuries to the reporter and photographer, Johnny Tanios and Rayhan Abdel Wahab, respectively. As the security forces prohibited local satellite staff from covering the events of the green zone gates.
31	14/11/2021	Kurdish security forces" Asayish " break into the institution (K-News) and red-tagged it in Dohuk.
32	16/11/2021	Communication and Media Commission (CNC) has suspended a television program aired on (Zakros) channel, on the account of hosting one of the guests who made accusations against the president of the Republic and the head of the Supreme Judicial Council.
33	23/11/2021	Five press crews were beaten and banned from covering protests in Kurdistan cities.
34	24/11/2021	Security forces in Erbil continued to prohibit journalists from covering protests.
35	25/11/2021	The reporter of Al-baghdadiya channel, Abbas al-Arkawi, was arrested in Sulaymaniyah. Roj News reporter and photographer, Barham Latif, and photographer, Barwa Asaad, were missing.
36	28/11/2021	A security force prohibited the staff of (AlRabia) channel from covering a demonstration of oil tanker workers in Basra.
37	02/12/2021	Anbar Crime Directorate detained (Al-Ahd) channel correspondent, Hamid Majid Al-Fahdawi, without an arrest warrant or charge.
38	27/12/2021	The secretary of Baghdad filed a lawsuit against the agency and the presenter of Al-Rashid channel, Yasser Amer, on the account of disclosing files of corruption.
39	01/01/2022	The security forces in Kirkuk attacked the correspondent of NRT channel, Diyar Mohammed, on the first day of the New Year.

40	01/01/2022	Basra health department prohibited media teams from filming injured people of the mine explosion in Rumaila.
41	06/01/2022	The bodyguards of Prime Minister, Mustafa al-kadhimi, prevented media crews from covering his visit to the site of the Jableh massacre, and detained their equipments.
42	06/01/2022	Journalist Dargham al-Maliki was arrested by a military force on charges of terrorism act-4 when he was covering a tribal conflict in Basra, and released few days later because the arrest warrant was wrong.
43	11/01/2022	Karbala Police Command continued to clamp down on journalists while performing their duties in the province.
44	23/01/2022	Riot police in Dhi Qar detained the photojournalist, Abbas Razak, while covering a protest for the martyrs of Al-Naqaa Center.
45	27/01/2022	The correspondent of Al-Janubia channel, Maher al-Harbi, was verbally insulted and banned along with his colleague the photographer, Asaad Yousef. While the crew of the channel faced harmful insults and harassment.
46	27/01/2022	Al-Marbid radio reporter, Nour Al-Tamimi, was beaten and insulted in Basra by a security officer while covering the Prime Minister visit, Mustafa al-kadhimi, to the province.
47	06/02/2022	Mass media were banned from covering a fire took place in oil pipelines in Kirkuk.
48	07/02/2022	Riot police beat and insulted Iraqi Media Network employees during their protest to demand their rights.
49	23/02/2022	AlTagheer channel staff was prohibited from covering the campaign to remove irregularities and designated places violations in Basra.
50	23/02/2022	The presenter Raed Al-Khalidi was subjected to bullying campaign after his program aired on MBC channel regarding medical sector and the importance of taking into account the lives of citizens and the consequent risks.
51	27/02/2022	Karbala emergency police detained al-Ghadir TV reporter, Jassim Al-humaim, inside Al-Hindi hospital for more than half an hour, confiscated the crews equipments to prevent them from covering the fire occurred at Tawreej hospital.
52	13/03/2022	Workers in "Kurdistan 24" survived serious injuries due to the shattering of glass of the channel building under a missile attack targeting Erbil after midnight.
53	16/03/2022	Kurdish security forces (Asayish) detained and beaten the employees of NRT, Taif Goran and Ahmad rukzi, in Dohuk.
54	20/03/2022	The bodyguards of Prime Minister Mustafa al-kadhimi prevented journalists from covering the opening of Al-Batul hospital in Mosul and restricting coverage to governmental channels.
55	27/03/2022	Basra police prevented (Hona Basra) channel staff from

		covering the campaign to remove irregularities and violations in Al-wafod Street.
56	04/04/2022	TV presenter at (Hona Baghdad) channel has been subjected to defamation and bullying through social media.
57	07/04/2022	An arrest warrant was issued to arrest the presenter, Ahmed Mullah Talal, and the actor, Iyad al-Taie, following a TV program dealing with corruption files in the military.
58	15/04/2022	The journalist Rafif al-Hafez was subjected to a campaign of defamation and abuse by some pages on social media because of her program that aired on (i News) channel, which disclosed some organizations that took advantage of women's issues to serve their own interest.
59	23/04/2022	Iraqi authorities arrested a German journalist in the northern Iraqi city (Sinjar), without saying the reasons behind the arrest.
60	24/04/2022	TV presenter on (AlRabia) channel was subjected to a campaign of bullying on social media because of the way she presented her program, as she did not refer to the shortcomings of the institution she works with, in terms of employment, experience and competence.
61	27/04/2022	20 complaints were reported along with consultation with a legal entity for (IWJF) regarding cases of harassment, extortion and suspension of female journalists from various cities of Iraq for the period from May 2021 to April 2022.

According to the statistics recorded above, the main axes of the report of the IWJF for the period 4 May 2021 until 3 May 2022 were divided into:

First: the safety and protection of the employees in the media sector:

The statistics recorded by the IWJF reflected the volume of harassment of journalists in Iraq, as the working environment have witnessed high rates of violence, especially during the demonstrations, and these violations did not reach out to journalists and media professionals only, but also targeted activists and bloggers. The main reasons behind all of this are:

- 1-Incompatibility of legislation and media laws with what is guaranteed by the effective Iraqi constitution for the year 2005.
2. The increasing number of armed groups belonging to some political parties.
- 3-Failure to disclose the perpetrators and hold them accountable.
4. Failure to amend the law on the rights of journalists adopted in 2011.
- 5-Absence of legislation to access information .
- 6-Non-compliance with international conventions that guaranteed freedom of the press, the safety of journalists and freedom of expression.

7-Lack of legislation to maintain the freedom of demonstration and peaceful assembly.

8-Weak procedures for the safety of journalists and their right of privacy in the digital era.

Second: freedom of the press and the independence of media institutions.

The Iraqi women Journalists Forum noted that some media institutions hinder the press work by decisions issued by the Communication and Media Commission, and prohibited some channels from covering events in some areas. In addition to that, large numbers of employees were laid off due to the economic situation, lack of funding, and the pandemic.

Most of the channels operating are affiliated with political parties, as political parties fund some channels that are supposed to represent the independent axis, especially with the lack of funding and the high rates of harassment, threats and extortion.

The commitment to implement the Iraqi Media Network law so far is weak. The board of Trustees of the network is appointed according to partisan quotas away from independence. In addition to the high rates of electronic extortion by unknown parties, and the most segment exposed to this type of harassment are women working in the media sector because of the nature of the tribal and male-dominated society.

Third: gender equality in the media sector.

The Legal entity under the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum have recorded cases of extortion, defamation and bullying against Iraqi women journalists, most of which were through social media. As Journalists have complained of the ongoing harassment, and some of them pointed out to gender discrimination in media institutions, noted that the management and the presidency of departments positions are in favor of men at the expense of women. The Forum also noted during the period of preparing this report that the management of the Iraqi Media Network did not to comply with the implementation of the quota in the board of Trustees, which is supposed to be one third according to the law; two women out of the 6 members of the council. However, the policy of quotas and the lack of application of the law led to the fact that the board of Trustees remains without real representation of women, in addition to the weak supervisory role of the House of Representatives in this regard. The statistics and complaints received by the legal entity proved that number of women in media were subjected to harassment by the head departments of media institutions, considering their suspension of work or minimizing their monthly pay for unreasonable reasons or under false accusations.

The current reality of the Iraqi media can be summarized according to the data of the annual Monitoring Report Of IWJF as:

- 1-High cases of defamation and bullying through social media.
- 2-The male-dominated view and traditional concepts that consider women vulnerable, incompetence, and easy to take advantage of.
- 3-The management of media institutions employ women who lack the experience and competence to fulfill the jobs but have personal and partisan relationships with.
- 4-Reflect a negative image of women in media by appointing women that have nothing to do with media to work in some media institutions that may look inappropriate, especially during the month of Ramadan.
- 5-The absence of employment contracts that regulate the relationship between media employees and institutions, which identify their rights and duties. This requires an intensive work by the Communication and Media Commission.
- 6-Failure to comply with the provisions of the Iraqi Media Network law, especially with regard to quotas and gender equality in employments and holding positions.
- 7-Lack of funding led a few number of media institutions to shut their doors, and the decision made by the Communication and Media Commission to stop a number of TV channels have caused a high unemployment rate among media professionals in general and the female in particular.
- 8-Lack of media content that represent the mechanisms of professional journalistic work, which can change the stereotypical image of women in the media.
- 9-The lack of training workshops in media institutions to build capacity of their employees that consider and recognize gender equality content to change the dominating stereotype about women in media.
- 10-The absence of government regulations regarding the risks faced by media employees due to the pandemic, as many of them were laid off.
- 11-Weak government measures regarding the online media environment to enhance the safety of journalists and improve their working conditions.
- 12-The weakness of training workshops on the safety of female journalists and their right to privacy in the digital age.

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