

The Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq must immediately release journalist Sherwan Sherwani and end judicial harassment

We, the undersigned press freedom and human rights organizations, call on the Kurdistan Regional Government to immediately and unconditionally release journalist Sherwan Sherwani, who remains [unjustly](#) imprisoned for his independent reporting and targeted through systematic [judicial harassment](#) intended to silence dissent and critical journalism.

On August 20, 2025, the Erbil Criminal Court [sentenced](#) Sherwani to an additional four years and five months in prison. This is his third conviction since 2021, each widely recognized as politically motivated retaliation for his investigative works into corruption and human rights abuses. Sherwani's only "crime" is practicing journalism.

At every stage, Sherwani has been denied the most basic guarantee of due process, including the right to a fair defense and impartial adjudication. [Sherwani](#)'s legal ordeal began with a six-year sentence in 2021, followed by another conviction in [July 2023](#) on vague forgery charges. His latest conviction in 2025 was based on contradictory witness testimony and unverified allegations. [Observers](#) of the [proceedings](#) reported serious procedural irregularities, a lack of transparency, and an atmosphere of intimidation that rendered the trial fundamentally unfair.

The misuse of the judicial system to punish journalists like Sherwani is a grave violation of international human rights standards and undermines the Kurdistan Region's own legal obligations and commitments to justice. His case reflects a broader and alarming decline in press freedom across the Middle East, where dissent is increasingly criminalized.

We urge the Kurdistan Regional Government to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Sherwan Sherwani and refrain from challenging any appeal of his conviction
- End the abusive application of the law to target journalists and ensure all legal proceedings comply with international standards of fairness and transparency
- Honor its commitments to human rights and the rule of law by taking concrete measures to protect the safety and independence of all journalists working in the Kurdistan Region

The continued imprisonment of Sherwan Sherwani gravely undermines the Kurdistan Region's international reputation as a region committed to democratic principles. We call on you to take immediate, principled action to reverse this decline, and to reaffirm your commitment to press freedom, human dignity, and the rule of law.

Signed by:

1. [Committee to Protect Journalists \(CPJ\)](#)

2. [Reporters Without Borders \(RSF\)](#)
3. [Community Peacemaker Teams \(CPT\)](#)
4. [International Press Institute \(IPI\)](#)
5. [MENA Rights Group](#)
6. [Metro Center for Journalists' Rights & Advocacy](#)
7. [Jasana Organization for Freedom of Expression](#)
8. [The International Rights Institute \(IRI\)](#)
9. [Reporters for Rights and Development](#)
10. [The Press Freedom Advocacy Association in Iraq \(PFAA\)](#)
11. [Iraqi Association for Defending Journalists' Rights](#)
12. [ActiveWatch](#)
13. [HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement](#)
14. [PEREGRAF Media Foundation](#)
15. [Democracy for the Arab World Now - DAWN](#)
16. [INSM Foundation for Digital Rights](#)
17. [Cartoonists Rights Network International](#)
18. [Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights \(EIPR\)](#)