

November 12, 2019

The Right Honorable Justin Trudeau, P.C., B. A., B.Ed.

Prime Minister of Canada, Leader the Liberal Party of Canada

House of Commons

Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

We are a group of Canadian civil society organizations deeply concerned over the Iraqi authorities' response to the protests which violates the Iraqi citizens' Right to Life and the Right to Peaceful Assembly & Freedom of Expression^{1,2}. We are writing to ask you to intervene to end the violence and bloodshed which has characterized the Iraqi governmental response to the popular protests in Iraq since 1 October 2019.

From 1 to 9 October 2019 a large-scale demonstration erupted in Baghdad and several governates in southern and central Iraq against state corruption, unemployment and a lack of basic services. In response, the Iraqi security forces and armed elements (described as private militia groups) deliberately and without previous warning, fired live ammunition, beat protesters, and conducted abductions and multiple arrests to the activists. The casualties from this initial round of governmental violence are 157 deaths and 5,494 injured¹.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) provided in its Human Rights Special Report "Demonstrations in Iraq" (1-9 October 2019) indicated that UNAMI received credible reports of violations of the right to life, including deliberate killings of unarmed protesters and excessive use of force by units deployed to manage the demonstrations¹. UNAMI's interim findings found that serious human rights violations and abuses had been committed in the context of the demonstrations in Iraq. The number of dead, the extent and scale of injuries inflicted on demonstrators, all suggest that Iraqi security forces had used excessive force against demonstrators in Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq¹.

The report also highlighted concerns regarding the widespread use of repressive measures to limit publicly available information on the demonstrations¹. "The loss of life, serious injuries and harm resulting from the violence during the demonstrations was both tragic and preventable," said Chief of UNAMI Human Rights Office, Danielle Bell. "Concrete steps to enable peaceful assemblies and protect those participating should be a priority."²

The signatories to this letter support the following UNAMI recommendations which direct the Iraqi authorities to take concrete steps to prevent violence and enable future peaceful demonstrations:¹

1. Prevention of future human rights violations and abuses during demonstrations.
2. Investigation of the events which occurred during demonstrations since 1 October, with a view to establishing the facts and circumstances of alleged violations committed, ensuring accountability of perpetrators and effective remedies for victims.

3. Creation of a civic environment for the general public, to exercise their fundamental freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association and political participation without undue interference and discrimination.

The demonstrations began again on 25 October and have continued until now. Naturally, the demonstrators have expressed great frustration at the deaths and injuries attributed both to excessive use of force by the security forces and deliberate killings by armed elements during the earlier demonstrations. In addition, demonstrators have started to call for fundamental changes to the political system. Despite the UNAMI recommendations in the Human Rights Special Report "Demonstrations in Iraq" (1-9 October 2019), the Iraqi security forces and armed elements continue to commit human rights abuses like the use of lethal force against demonstrators, the unnecessary, disproportionate and/or improper use of tear gas and stun grenades, abductions and multiple arrests. The government has also continued efforts to limit media coverage of demonstrations. As of 4 November, violence during the demonstrations that started on 25 October had caused at least 97 deaths and injured thousands more people, including members of the Iraqi security forces³.

We call you to demand that the Iraqi government and its actors cease the escalation of violence which has resulted in the following violations of the Right to Life and the Right to Peaceful Assembly & Freedom of Expression^{1,3}:

1. Armed elements using live ammunition against protestors
2. Security forces using live ammunition against protestors
3. The Use of Less-Lethal Weapons in Baghdad
4. Arrest, Detention and Abduction
5. Freedom of Expression

Specifically, we ask you to call on the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mr. Adil Abdul-Mahdi, to implement the following recommendations of the second UNAMI report:

1. The Right to Life

- 1.1. Acknowledgement of the deaths and investigation of the full circumstances of the killings that have occurred since 1 October .
- 1.2. Conduct prompt, independent, impartial, effective, thorough and transparent investigations into all demonstration-linked deaths that occurred since 1 October.
- 1.3. Prompt implementation of the recommendations for accountability contained in the Government's Investigative Committee Report issued on 22 October.
- 1.4. Preventive steps to protect demonstrators from potential violence by 'third' armed elements.
- 1.5. Reassessment of instructions on the use of tear gas to security forces policing demonstrations.
- 1.6. Acknowledgement that the use of force against demonstrators is always a measure of last resort, should never be indiscriminate.

2. The Right to Peaceful Assembly & Freedom of Expression

- 2.1. Protection, respect and fulfilment of the right to peaceful assembly, including by exercising due diligence in preventing abuse committed by non-State actors.
- 2.2. Restoration and maintenance of access to social media.
- 2.3. Cessation of all interference with media actors aimed at reducing coverage of the demonstrations, including any forms of intimidation, harassment and unnecessary restrictions.
- 2.4. Protection of media actors from interference by armed elements.
- 2.5. Cessation of all arrests of journalists, social media commentators and bloggers and activists solely for expressing support to protests or reporting on, and participating in, demonstrations.
- 2.6. Retraction of the application of the Federal Anti-Terrorism Law to demonstrators, so that demonstrators who have committed crimes, such as destruction of property, are always charged pursuant to the Criminal Code.

Representatives of our organizations are prepared to meet with you or your representatives to discuss our demands. You may reach us at 519-318-6723 or by email at 4cs.main@gmail.com . We look forward to your prompt response and action.

Sincerely,

1. Dr. Samim Al- Qadhi -President the Canadian Civic Cultural Club (4Cs)
2. Thomas Woodley, President- Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME)
3. Esther Kern – Christian Peacemaker Teams Canada
4. Mazen Shahatto- President - the Canadian Arab Society
5. Esam Alsafar- President -Canadian Iraqi House
6. Mohannad Kelani- President-Canadian Palestinian Social Association
7. Nora Taji -President Canadian Palestinian Foundation of Quebec
8. Ghanim Komo President Chaldean society of Mar Omaha
9. Eman Baktash -President Iraqi Canadian Society of Ontario
10. Zamurd Ibrahim - President The Canadian Iraqi House
11. Dr. Khaled Al-Haider-President Mandaean Canadian Community Association
12. Rafe Sleewa President St. Joseph Chilean Catholic Church
13. Souhad Baban- President Iraqi Hope Democratic Association
14. Ibrahim Haron- Presidenb Assyrian Aid society
15. Amel Habib-President On us u can lean organization
16. Madeh Alsadiq-President Human Culture

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia.Freeland@parl.gc.ca
Chrystia.Freeland@international.gc.ca

The Honourable Andrew Scheer - leader Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, leader Conservative Party
andrew.scheer@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Jagmeet Singh, Leader New Democratic Party jagmeet@ndp.ca
Jagmeet.Singh@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Yves-François Blanchet, Leader Bloc Québécois Yves-Francois.Blanchet@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Roberts, Jo-Ann (acting) Leader Green Party joann.roberts@greenparty.ca

The Honourable Omar Alghabra, P.C., M.P. OMAR.ALGHABRA@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Marwan Tabbara, P.C., M.P. Marwan.Tabbara@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Lindsey Mathyssen, P.C., M.P.

His Excellency Dr. Wade Batti , Ambassador of Iraq in Canada info@iqemb.ca
wadeebatti@hotmail.com

References:

¹ Human Rights Special Report 'Demonstrations in Iraq' (1-9 October 2019). Published (Tuesday, 22 October 2019) The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Retrieved in Nov 10, 2019 from: http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=11903:unami-special-report-on-demonstrations-in-iraq-22-october-2019&Itemid=650&lang=en

² UNAMI urges Iraqi authorities to prevent violence, enable peaceful demonstrations in future. The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), News, (Tuesday, 22 October 2019 20:09). Retrieved in Nov 10, 2019 from: http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=11904:unami-urges-iraqi-authorities-to-prevent-violence-enable-peaceful-demonstrations-in-future&Itemid=605&lang=en

³ HUMAN RIGHTS SPECIAL REPORT: Demonstrations in Iraq: update. The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), News, (Tuesday, 22 October 2019 20:09). Retrieved in Nov 10, 2019 from: Human rights violations ongoing: UN Second Special Report on protests in Iraq http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=11994:human-rights-special-report-demonstrations-in-iraq-update&Itemid=650&lang=en

⁴ Human rights violations ongoing: UN Second Special Report on protests in Iraq. The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), News, (Tuesday, 05 November 2019 17:44). Retrieved in Nov 10, 2019 from: http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=11995:human-rights-violations-ongoing-un-second-special-report-on-protests-in-iraq&Itemid=605&lang=en