

2.4.2 Journalists and media workers

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The Iraqi Constitution guarantees freedom of expression621 in a manner that does not violate public order and morality.622 Iraq's Penal Code contains several vaguely worded provisions that restrict freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, allowing authorities to prosecute623 and arrest individuals for expressing their views.624 For example, Article 403 penalises material that 'violates public integrity or decency' without defining these terms,625 while Article 434 criminalises defamation and insult.626 These provisions are frequently used to deter criticism of powerful political and religious figures,627 particularly targeting independent journalists.628 Therefore, authorities continued to suppress freedom of expression during the reporting period, often under the pretext of maintaining stability or public morality.629 As such, according to Reporters Without Borders, Iraq ranked 155th out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index for 2025.630 Civil society organisations, human rights defenders and journalists faced prosecution, intimidation, and harassment for criticising public officials,631 including by targeting their social media accounts.632 Between May 2024 and May 2025, UNAMI documented 26 cases in which activists and journalists were charged with defamation for criticising government officials or policies.633 Security forces, both in federal Iraq and in the KRI, used violence against journalists for covering protests.634

The Media and Communications Commission suspended political talk shows,635 restricted broadcasting of certain programmes and banned specific media commentators following objections from the Coordination Framework and Shia clerics.636 Several television channels reportedly received threats from armed groups.637 The potential banning of TikTok resurfaced following remarks by the Minister of Communication, Hiyam Al-Yasiri, who claimed the app 'undermines Iraq's social fabric'.638

In the KRI, security forces and individuals affiliated with powerful political parties continued to intimidate, harass and threaten journalists and activists. Security forces arrested or summoned several journalists639 for covering protests or conducting investigative reporting.640

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) documented the killing of two journalists in Iraq.641 In August 2024, Asayish forces attacked a journalist and a cameraman, while the latter were covering protests, for refusing to hand over the camera and microphone. In the same month, security forces attacked a journalist in Baghdad for covering a protest by medical school graduates demanding jobs.642 In October 2024, a female social media activist died, under unclear circumstances, in a Baghdad prison after receiving a two-year sentence from a Kirkuk court.643 The Ministry of Justice refused to disclose the death report, and some perceived the

case as ‘suspicious’.644 On 23 August 2024, a Turkish drone strike killed two female journalists near Sulaymaniyah;645 unknown perpetrators attacked their memorial on 11 February 2025. 646 In November 2024, a journalist survived in an attack in which he was stabbed 21 times in Sulaymaniyah after the latter alleged that a Peshmerga Affairs Ministry official obstructed a local electricity project.647 In June 2025, PMF forces arrested a Kurdish journalist in Baghdad while he covered a protest.648

Following the outbreak of the Iran-Israel conflict in June 2025, Iraq’s National Security Service (NSS) announced it is actively monitoring social media and will pursue legal action against users posting content deemed to incite sectarian or political tensions.649

In February 2025, Iraq’s parliament held a first reading of a draft Right to Information Law which, if passed, would further restricts access to information.650 The draft bill sparked concerns among civil society organisations, journalists, and experts as several provisions would reportedly impose restrictions on access to information in key areas of government activities.651

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  IOHR, Lawsuit filed against journalist for freedom of expression, 26 October 2024, url

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  Article 38 reads: ‘The State shall guarantee in a way that does not violate public order and morality: A. Freedom of expression using all means. B. Freedom of press, printing, advertisement, media and publication. C. Freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration, and this shall be regulated by law.’ Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, url, Art. 38

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  AI, IRAQ: Reigning Impunity Amnesty International: Submission to The 48th Session of The Upr

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  AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2025, url; Art. 403 reads as follows: ‘Any person who produces, imports, publishes, possesses, obtains or translates a book, printed or other written material, drawing, picture, film, symbol or other thing that violates the public integrity or decency with intent to exploit or distribute such material is punishable by a period of detention not exceeding 2 years plus a fine not exceeding 200 dinars or by one of those penalties. The same penalty applies to any person who advertises such material or displays it in public or sells, hires or offers it for sale or hire even though it is not in public or to any person who distributes or submits it for distribution by any means. If the offence is committed with intent to deprave, it is considered to be an aggravating circumstances.’, Iraq, Penal Code, No. 111 of 1969, July 1969, url, art. 404

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AI, IRAQ: Reigning Impunity Amnesty International: Submission to The 48th Session of The Upr

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  Art. 434 reads as follows: ‘Insult is the imputation to another of something dishonorable or disrespectful or

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  AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2025, url

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  Shafaq News, Iraq's human rights decline, freedoms face clear threats, says rights center, 10 December 2024, url

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  UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, para 52; UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 26 November 2024, url, para 54

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  CPJ, Iraqi security forces assault 2 news crews covering protests, 20 August 2024, url; HRW, World Report 2025 – Iraq, 16 January 2025, url

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CPJ, Iraqi authorities suspend political talk show Al-Haq Yuqal, order past episodes removed, 5 May 2025, url

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Carnegie Endowment, The Risks of Deepening Sectarianism in Iraq, 28 August 2024, url

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CPJ, Armed group threatens Iraq’s Al Rabiaa TV after report on Iran-US talks, 28 April 2025, url

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Al-Rubaie, A., Under the Pretext of "Morality": Morality Rhetoric and Freedom of Expression in Iraq, TWI, 15 June 2025, url

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RSF, Iraqi Kurdistan: RSF calls for the release of investigative journalists Bashdar Bazyani and Sherwan Sherwani,14 March 2025, url; CPJ, Iraqi security forces assault 2 news crews covering protests, 20 August 2024, url

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CPJ, Explore CPJ’s database of attacks on the press – Iraq, n.d., (filtered by dates from 2024 to 2025), url

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CPJ, Iraqi security forces assault 2 news crews covering protests, 20 August 2024, url

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Kirkuk Now, Kirkuki Social Media Figure Died in a Baghdad Prison, 31 October 2024, url

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Kirkuk Now, All Remained Silent in Case of Shayan's "Suspicious" Death, 9 June 2025, url

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IFJ, Iraqi Kurdistan: Two women journalists killed and one other injured, 27 August 2024, url ; Medya News, Turkish drone strike kills two women journalists and injures others in Iraqi Kurdistan, 23 August 2024, url

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  AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2025, url

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  Art. 19, Iraq: MPs must propose substantive amendments to draft right to information law, 13 September 2024, url

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