

Update from The Kurdistan Region of Iraq's Coordinator for The Office of International Advocacy on Zakho (Zaxo)

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]

I hope you are doing well.

Below is an update for the previous statement (attached) on the protest in Zaxo and the allegations of arbitrary arrests' incident in Duhok.

Referring to the previous statement on the public disturbance in Zaxo, we illustrated that the protest lacked fundamental elements of a peaceful or civilized gathering; it was evidently a riot that involved vandalism, interference of armed PKK-supporters, aggressive chantings, among others. A large number of the protesters carried weapons, knives, and other detrimental objects. Still, the perpetrators were detained following the issuance of warrants.

It is noteworthy that no one who carried the instruments relevant to her/his journalistic career, nor if s/he was covering it, was arrested amid the riot. The journalists arrested were involved in the riot outside their journalistic capacities, pushing for public unrest. Furthermore, as a result of the riot, 61 persons from security forces and 4 civilians were injured, 18 were arrested with firearms, 26 police and civilian cars were damaged, and a child was injured with a fireshot.

With regards to NRT staff, Faruq Omar, leadership member of the New Generation's movement, Jahangir Sndi the head of NRT office in Zaxo, and Ahmad Sa'id Abdulrahman (Ahmad Zaxoyi), NRT's reporter, were arrested. Only Faruq Omar abstained from eating for a couple of days, so he was taken to the hospital. He is now recovered and released. Ahmad Zaxoyi was released on bail on August 30. Zaxoyi had been arrested on the basis of a court warrant and had access to his lawyer. Overall, 56 protesters were investigated, and now 40 of them are released (not on bail); 16 remain under investigation, including those released on bail.

There are allegations that around 140 political activists and journalists - including the Zaxo protesters - have recently been arrested in Duhok province without the proper due process of law. This claim remains unfounded. Excluding the already clarified details of the public disturbance in Zaxo, 4 other people have been arrested subsequent to opening lawsuits against them. The activist Badal Abulbaqi is among them, and his case is already referred to the Misdemeanor Court in Duhok.

KRG rules in accordance with democratic values that preach freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and expression, electoral integrity, good governance, and alike. KRG

proudly flourished with the preservation and promotion of values indispensable for a decent civil life.

Sincerely,