



The Kurdistan Regional Government High
Committee to Evaluate and Respond to
International Reports

Response Statement on Human Rights Watch Report, *“Iraq/Kurdistan: Men, Boys who fled
ISIS Detained”*

February 28, 2017

On February 26, 2017, Human Rights Watch published a report titled *“Iraq/Kurdistan: Men, Boys who fled ISIS Detained”* which mentions that KRG forces are arresting hundreds of men and boys who flee ISIS in the refugee camps without informing their families.

In response to the report, KRG’s High Committee to Evaluate and Respond to International Reports (HCERIR) stated that, following the huge influx of refugees and IDPs to the Kurdistan Region, the region was affected in a variety of ways including economically, financially as well as in terms of national security.

KRG’s relevant departments are following certain security procedures to facilitate and efficiently organize the huge number of IDPs through which the safety of the region including refugees and IDPs can be guaranteed.

HCERIR explained the KRG’s security procedures and pointed out that the majority of the IDPs flee to Kurdistan Region through Peshmerga frontlines which as a result, the role of the Peshmerga in the frontlines has become challenging. During the fleeing process, ISIS members infiltrate in the Kurdistan Region with the IDPs.

Upon their arrival in the Peshmerga borders, only IDP men go through a regular screening process for reassuring that they are not involved in any terrorist acts, and will later be sent to reception centres. Women do not go through such security screenings which has made UN agencies complain about why such is the case. This is due to traditional practices and respect issues to the women.

Regarding investigation process with the suspects, HCERIR stated that criminals and wanted persons infiltrate with the IDPs as they are afraid of their relatives’ treatment with them back home. Therefore, relevant KRG departments find it their responsibility to investigate their files and personal background information for the purpose of gathering information about their cases.

In the beginning, only regular people who had sought refuge in the Kurdistan Region for safety of their lives from terrorists lived in the camps. Hence, reports that the HRW publish are incorrect as they do not have complete and accurate information about the population and the demography of the camps.

In the reception centres, the suspects and wanted persons are sent to security institutions and relevant courts for necessary legal and security procedures. Based on evidence, 2000 people were arrested in Debaga camp only. The evidence found shows that majority of the arrested people were ISIS members who has gone through ISIS training and were even ISIS snipers.

On the detention process in the reception centres and camps, HCERIR highlighted that most of the IDPs have entered Kurdistan through Peshmerga frontlines where no investigation regarding the IDP’s files take place. The first investigation filter is for personal information investigation. Investigation process in the reception centres only encompasses recording basic information like name of the person and place of residence, and this is done in public and with the presence of international organizations. Following that, the information will be sent to information sources for confirmation of the information accuracy.

The families of the suspects are informed upon their arrest and they will be kept in Asayish for 24 hours where if found guilty of terrorism affiliation, will be sent to a relevant court and if evidence did not support such claims, they will be released.

The HCERIR concluded the statement by reassuring the presence of organizations such as UNHCR, Qendil and Barzani Charity Organization in the reception centres where they provide help for the IDPs. Qendil organization helps IDPs in terms of legal support and providing attorneys as well as introducing the IDPs legal rights. In time of fighting, some people have been arrested but if they were found innocent, they were released. However, the arrested men who are ISIS member suspects are arrested according to law.