

URGENT ACTION

TRUTH AND JUSTICE FOR DISAPPEARED ACTIVIST

On September 19, 2020, a group of armed men abducted Sajjad al-Iraqi, a prominent protester and activist involved in the 2019 Tishreen [October] protest movement. More than three years after his abduction, his whereabouts remain unknown, and his family have been subjected to threats as they pursue truth and justice. On March 22, 2023, the Dhi Qar Criminal Court sentenced to death in absentia two individuals convicted for kidnapping Sajjad al-Iraqi, but no arrests have been made. The Iraqi authorities must reveal the fate and whereabouts of Sajjad al-Iraqi, ensure his family is protected from reprisals, and hold those responsible to account in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 104.23**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani

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Embassy of Iraq in the United States

His Excellency Ambassador Nazar Al-Khirullah

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Your Excellency,

I am alarmed to learn that activist **Sajjad al-Iraqi's** whereabouts remain unknown over three years after he was forcibly disappeared. On September 19, 2020, a group of men abducted Sajjad al-Iraqi for his role in the nation-wide anti-government protests known as the "Tishreen" [October] protests.

I am also alarmed that Sajjad al-Iraqi's family have been subjected to threats by people believed to be linked to the abductors and to the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU). These individuals have pressured Sajjad al-Iraqi's family to drop their court case against Sajjad al-Iraqi's abductor, including by showing up at the family's home at least four times. On November 15, 2020, the Thi Qar Appeals Court issued arrest warrants for two individuals for Sajjad al-Iraqi's kidnapping, but neither suspect was arrested. On March 22, 2023, the Thi Qar Criminal Court sentenced these individuals to death in absentia for kidnapping Sajjad al-Iraqi, but to date, neither of them have been apprehended. A family member told Amnesty International that during a meeting with Your Excellency nine months ago a promise was made to follow up on Sajjad al-Iraqi's case.

We call on Your Excellency to order investigations to reveal the fate and whereabouts of Sajjad al-Iraqi and to ensure his family members are protected from threats and reprisals. We call on the authorities to order a re-trial of the defendants in their presence and in a manner that respects international standards without recourse to the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the mass anti-government protests that began in October 2019, known as the Tishreen [October] protests, security forces and members of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), a large network of militias legally considered part of the Iraqi Armed Forces, used lethal force against protestors and pursued a sinister campaign of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

Very few prosecutions of members of security forces or affiliated militias have taken place for their role in violence against protestors and activists. Since 2019, successive Iraqi governments have formed numerous committees to investigate violations committed in the context of the protests at the national and governorate level, but these committees have failed to deliver on truth or justice.

The most notable was the 'Fact-Finding Committee', established by Executive Order 293 issued by then-Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi on October 18, 2020 with the goal of gathering evidence, publishing a comprehensive report, and identifying those responsible for the crimes committed. Under the decree, the Committee has the right to refer cases to the judiciary. However, there has been no transparency as to whether this has occurred.

In a letter from Prime Minister Shia al-Sudani's Office to Amnesty International on April 2, 2023, the Office said that "the Prime Minister ordered in November 2022 the activation of the work of the [Fact-Finding] committee and outreach to representatives from the demonstrators." The Prime Minister also confirmed that reparations had been paid to the families of those killed, amounting to ten million Iraqi dinars for each victim. However, reparations are not a substitute for establishing the truth or bringing perpetrators to justice, and nearly three years after it was formed, the Fact-Finding Committee has yet to publish any findings.

Enforced disappearance is currently not a crime under Iraqi law and cannot be prosecuted as a distinct offense. On August 6, 2023, the Iraqi Council of Ministers issued a draft "Missing Persons Law" and sent it to Parliament. The draft's stated aim is to help relatives of the missing learn their fate and be given access to reparations, including by setting up a national commission for the missing. Yet, this draft law does not criminalize enforced disappearance or outline penalties for perpetrators. As a state party to the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons against Enforced Disappearance, Iraq has an obligation to criminalize enforced disappearances, investigate, bring perpetrators to justice, and ensure reparation for victims.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: December 26, 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Sajjad al-Iraqi (he/him)