



INTERNATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Her Excellency Wijdan Mikhail Salim
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Your Excellency:

On behalf of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), I am writing to express deep concern about an alarming increase in violence based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity in Iraq over the past few weeks. Iraqi officials have recently confirmed the murder of six men whose bodies were found in the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad. The Iraqi authorities unearthed the bodies of 4 men killed by gunshots on March 25, 2009. On April 2, Iraqi police found the bodies of two additional men who were reportedly killed by members of their tribe to restore their family honor. Media reports suggest that vigilantes killed these men because of their perceived sexual orientation.

This wave of violence coincides with an arson attack against a Sadr City coffee house that was popular among gay men. IGLHRC has also received reports of official persecution—abduction, torture, trial without due process, and execution—of Iraqis who the government believes to have been part of a gay organization. In addition, IGLHRC learned today that an Iraqi group known as "Fazilat" (Virtue) has circulated flyers around Sadr City threatening gay men with death and listing the names of their potential targets.

As a signatory to international treaties that assure the right to privacy, liberty and security of the person and the right to non-discrimination, it is Iraq's obligation to protect its citizens and ensure that human rights violations are fully investigated and that perpetrators are brought to justice.

The new Iraqi Constitution protects the equality of all citizens before the law (Article 14), guarantees everyone's right to enjoy "life, freedom, and security" (Article 15) and reiterates the right of all Iraqis to live "in freedom and with dignity" (Article 35). The mob murder of men perceived to be gay also violates the Iraqi Constitution, since the law protects the private lives of all citizens (Article 17), makes any kind of violence against family members a crime (Article 29) and prohibits extra-judicial punishment

(Article 19, Section 2). Despite the legal obligations of the Iraqi government to protect all citizens, crimes committed against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Iraqis and those believed to be homosexual are not properly investigated or prosecuted.

In accordance with Article 2 of the Charter of the Ministry of Human Rights (CMHR), which was passed by the Iraqi parliament as law number 60 in 2006, it is the responsibility of your ministry to “promote ...and secure the implementation of.... the culture of human rights and personal freedom in accordance with international treaties that Iraq has entered... and prevent its violation.”

To fulfill this mandate, we request that your ministry take the following steps:

- 1- Actively and thoroughly document cases of human rights abuses against LGBT people and include this information in your annual report on the status of human rights in Iraq for submission to parliament and the cabinet. (Article 3, Section 2, CMHR)
- 2- Prepare a comprehensive report on state, community and family violence based on sexual orientation with concrete recommendations on how to stop such human rights violations. (Article 3, Section 3, CMHR)
- 3- Launch an investigation into the Iraqi legal system—including police, judiciary, and penal systems—to assure the full enjoyment of human rights principles by all people, regardless of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
- 4- Promote a culture of tolerance and respect for the rights of LGBT people at the tribal level and within the larger Iraqi society. (Article 3, Section 11, CMHR)

IGLHRC is ready to support the efforts of the Iraqi government to secure the rights of its same-sex practicing citizens through training, consultation and information exchange.

We trust that you will give this matter due attention.

Yours sincerely,



Cary Alan Johnson
Executive Director
International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission