

Statement for the UPR Pre-Session\Iraq
Geneva, October 10, 2019
by Hasan Wahhab Al-Araji

Honorable Representatives of the Permanent Missions,
Dear colleagues working on promoting human rights in Iraq,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Arab NGO Network for Development and in follow up of a joint submission prepared by ANND.

My statement will focus specially on economic and social rights and the situation of human right defenders.

- The poverty rate is in increase; in the areas most impacted by military operations against ISIL, it exceeds 40 per cent, in comparison to the already high 22.5 per cent in the rest of the country¹.
- There are 6.7 million people (18 per cent of the total population) in need of humanitarian assistance. An estimated 4.5 million people face protection concerns. Almost 2 million people remain displaced, over half of whom have been displaced for more than three years.
- Unemployment remains a vital issue and is in constant increase both for male and female. In addition, the percentage of informal workers reached %55 of the total number of male workers %47.8 of the total of female workers. With regard to the situation of migrant workers, that second cycle UPR covered; there has been no significant progress; there are 200,000 foreign workers without security or health guarantees and with wages lower than their counterparts.²
- With regard to the right to education, the decrease in school enrolment, attendance, the increase in school drop-out and high illiteracy rates, especially among girls, limited availability of schools, and the fact that many of them are in poor physical condition and lack essential facilities remain key concerns. As noted by UNICEF³, there are close to 3.2 million school-aged Iraqi children out of school. The situation is worse, especially in conflict affected governorates, such as Salah al-Din and Diyala, where more than 90% of school-age children are left out of the education system.
- In such dire conditions, Human rights defenders, working on various issues including on economic and social rights play a significant role. Although under Iraq's previous UPR examination, the government received two recommendations on this issue; HRDs and activists have been subjected to deliberate attacks and targeted abuse in connection with their activities, including murder, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and detention, intimidation, online harassment and smear campaigns.

¹ World Bank, Damage and Needs Assessment, 2018.

² Website of Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

³ <https://www.unicef.org/iraq/what-we-do/education>

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In this context, we urge the Working Group and the members of the Human Rights Council to call upon the government of Iraq to:

1. Prioritize addressing security, humanitarian crises in order to address poverty; take into consideration poverty is multidimensional.
2. Ensure the adoption of a comprehensive national development plan that integrates diversification of economy, tackling corruption and high unemployment in the country.
3. Adopt and implement an effective employment policy enhancing decent work opportunities.
4. Prioritize education sector through an inclusive and comprehensive education strategy that aims at improving the efficiency of the educational system.
5. Ensure allocation of maximum available resources for increasing the quality of the infrastructure in education through restoration of school building and facilities
6. Ensure adoption of curricula taking human rights considerations
7. Bring Iraqi laws in line with international conventions on the protection of human rights defenders and officially and publicly recognize the legitimacy of the work of defenders.
8. Conduct prompt, impartial and effective investigations into all cases implicating state and state-affiliated forces of attacks, enforced disappearances, targeted killings, harassment and intimidation against HRDs and bring the perpetrators to justice.