



Status of Advocates

in 2024 - 2025

Prepared By:
The Defend Defenders Network

Publication Year:
2726 Kurdish - 2025 A.D.





پێکخراوی خەڵک بۆ گەشەپێدان People's Development Organization

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Introduction to People's Development Organization

People's Development Organization (PDO), in partnership with the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), implemented the project "Empowering Civil Society to Promote Equality and Democratic Sustainable Society in KRI." over the past three years. This project was one of the important and strategic initiatives that emphasized empowering women cognitively and enhancing women's effective participation, as well as conducting advocacy campaigns for issues related to human rights and women's issues in the Kurdistan Region and Iraq.

What is worth noting is that one of the objectives of this project was to work on a very important issue related to the lives of those who serve as defenders, standing behind the rescue of dozens of lives, as these individuals often find their own lives at risk. Therefore, it was important for the organization to subject such an issue to analysis and data collection to better understand the situation of defenders, as well as to prepare a report that would highlight some of these challenges.

More importantly, the establishment of a group called the "Defend Defenders Network," composed of women's organizations, civil society organizations, and independent defenders. This group was established at a time when targeted and intense attacks began against defenders, whose clear objective is protecting human rights and issues specific to women. People's Development Organization made a serious and extensive effort to shed light on such an important issue as the situation of defenders by creating a specialized network for the protection of defenders from media, legal, social, and psychological perspectives. This report is the product of this section of the project's work, and at the same time became an important source in the report of civil society organizations and women's organizations that was sent under the name of the CEDAW report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. This became an important matter on which 21 organizations agreed to bring this issue to the United Nations in Geneva.

Summary

Defenders of human rights, women's rights, children's rights, and various social groups continuously face diverse challenges. This situation requires taking a stance and serious attention. Due to their support for women's cases and victims of gender-based and social violence, defenders continuously face pressure and psychological and physical violence at several levels, with the main objective being to silence them, marginalize them, break their character, and weaken their role and influence in society.

To confront these attacks, threats, and harassment, a specialized network for defending defenders has been formed, and this network considers it its duty to monitor the situation of defenders and provide them with the necessary support and assistance.

According to the monitoring by the Defend Defenders Network, social, psychological, physical, and economic pressures against defenders continue extensively. The absence of legal text to serve as a barrier against these pressures has made the situation more difficult. Defenders need legal, media, social support and financial backing to be able to work in the environment of the Kurdistan Region and Iraq while keeping their lives protected.

The Defend Defenders Network was established for this purpose, aiming to prevent the discrimination, pressure, and constraints that defenders face at different levels and locations. According to the collected data, the rate of pressures is at a level that has created negative impacts on the lives and psychological condition of defenders.

In this report, attention has been given to various aspects of the defenders' situation, and the content of a survey by the Defend Defenders Network has been presented. The results show that defenders need greater legal, social, and economic support to be able to fulfill their true duty of advocacy and defense of the rights of social and gender components and human rights.

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Introduction to the Defend Defenders Network

Establishment: The Defend Defenders Network was established on August 12, 2024, upon the proposal of People's Development Organization and was announced on December 5, 2024, in Sulaymaniyah.

Founding Organizations: The names of the founding organizations within the Defend Defenders Network: (People's Development Organization PDO, Women's Media and Culture Organization, Zhnan-Women's Union of Kurdistan Organization, Khanzad Cultural and Social Organization, Asuda Organization for Combating Violence Against Women, Metro Center, Network 19). **Names of Defenders within the Defend Defenders Network:** Bahar Munzir, Shada Bashir, Kajal Abdul Qadir, Shirin Tahir, Arsalan Rahman, Niaz Salih, Jwan Rahim, Sharo Shaho, Shabaz Mahmoud, Diyar Barzanji, Nigar Rashid, Rubar Khalid, Shayi Aso, Ashna Hama, Suzan Faraj, Diyar Barzanji, Shirin Sabur.

Importance of This Network: A key function of this network is to monitor the situation of defenders and records all the violations that defenders face at different levels and locations.

Its Duties: Preparing monitoring reports, supporting defenders, following up on their cases, and providing necessary assistance to them.

Mode of Operation: The network operates through a network of activists who work in different areas of the Kurdistan Region and Iraq, utilizing social media platforms for coordination and joint work, and issues a specialized monitoring report every six months. The network's mobile number and email are available for contact.

Contact: We call upon civil society organizations and activists in the fields of defending human rights, children's rights, and women's rights in general, whenever there is any kind of pressure, obstacle, threat, or danger

to their lives, dignity, and personality, to contact the Defend Defenders Network:

Mobile numbers: 07765126372 07517696598

Email: defenddefenders6@gmail.com



The Defend Defenders Network Founding Committee



The background features a large, light teal shape in the top-left corner and a similar, slightly darker teal shape in the bottom-right corner. Overlaid on these are two large, thin, golden-brown circles that intersect to form a central lens-like shape. The text is centered within this lens.

Part One

The Situation of Defenders in 2024-2025

First: General Observations

Defenders, due to their advocacy for women's rights issues, gender equality, human rights, and the rights of various groups in 2024 and the first half of 2025, have faced social, economic, political, security, and legal pressures similar to previous years, including:

1. From a Social Perspective:

A number of defenders who advocate for rights face social difficulties and obstacles in their working environment, creating a sense of unannounced efforts to exclude and marginalize them from public space. The source of these difficulties and obstacles is the prevalent discourse of media, institutions, and religious minbars (pulpits) directed toward women and their organizations. Also, from a social perspective, work is done to marginalize women's organizations as licensed institutions and organizations, continuously tarnishing their image in society.

2. From an Economic Perspective:

A number of organizations working in the field of women's issues, which had government budget and assistance allocated to them, have had their budgets and assistance suspended since 2012. For this reason, a significant portion of them closed and could not continue. Those currently working in the field rely more on financial assistance from international organizations.

In the region, no financial assistance is allocated to support independent organizational work serving women, except for those organizations that are party organs whose main task is party organization among women.

Women's organizations and their projects serving the women of Kurdistan have not benefited from the substantial budget of the Iraqi

state, part of which is spent within the framework of organizational work. No field of women's rights, human rights, or various community groups in the Kurdistan Region has benefited from it. Therefore, in the past two years particularly, despite the continuation of the financial crisis and the unavailability of necessary budget for carrying out the civil duties of organizations, activists' work has been voluntary or supported by foreign and international organizations' financial backing.

3. Political and Security Pressure:

Some women's organizations and activists are continuously subjected to political and partisan pressure to take positions in favor of dominant political parties. Conversely, they face a kind of political and security pressure, including marginalization, prevention from activities, weakening their role in society, and giving attention to voices opposed to women's organizations' work and creating platforms for them to criticize women's organizations more loudly. Also, authorities, in order to gather support and gain religious legitimacy, give free rein to closed Salafi currents in society, creating a significant negative impact on the development of organizational work in the Kurdistan Region.

Apart from these, on the last day of 2024, security forces in Sulaymaniyah city, without a judicial decision and outside legal procedures, and during an official holiday in the region, closed the doors of two cultural organizations dedicated to women and suspended their work, without publishing any announcement or clarification about the pretext for this attack on the organizations.

Another political effort to marginalize women is excluding women from political decision-making centers and diplomatic work. In all the visits and delegations from the region that have traveled to Baghdad to discuss resolving political and financial issues, women have never been members of Kurdish delegations. The repetition of this pattern shows that political

authority does not believe in women's participation in public space and decision-making centers. In the political bureaus of parties and high political decision-making centers in the region, women are marginalized, and the participation given to them is more ceremonial than based on belief in women's capabilities.

4. Legal Pressure:

Under charges of “opposing religion” and the “high values” of society and “opposing family and the foundations of Islam,” as well as charges of “promoting homosexuality, gender change, and establishing gender equality,” the judicial, legal, and political authorities of the region have paved the way for any member of society, particularly religious teachers and ordinary citizens under the influence of religious discourse, to file complaints against women activists and their organizations and bring them before courts, in order to undermine women's steps and tarnish the image of organizations and attempt to close them. The clearest example is that through the efforts of a parliamentarian from an Islamic party in the previous session of the Kurdistan Parliament, on May 31, 2023, Sulaymaniyah Primary Court 4 issued a decision to revoke the license of “Rasan” organization, which was dedicated to developing awareness about gender equality.

Apart from these, a number of women's rights activists, including the founder of the Gender Center at the American University of Sulaymaniyah, Dr. Choman Hardi, the director of Daben organization Dilsoz Shafiq, and others, have been subjected to judicial and legal procedures due to complaints filed against them, and their cases have been opened in courts.

Also, those activists who monitored cases of crimes against women in courts have faced various pressures at social, political, and legal levels to withdraw from the process of monitoring trials and choose silence and not demand punishment for women's killers.

5. Media Pressure and Social Media Platforms:

A significant portion of Kurdish media, a pillar of public life in the Kurdistan Region, is driven by figures who avoid women's issues and human rights and do not want to appear as supporters of women's issues in society because they fear the consequences. They continuously work to produce discourse that is devoid of serving gender equality and advancing women's issues.

A large portion of Kurdish media channels give free rein to religious discourse, do not give women their necessary and appropriate role, and even in managing the channels, women have been given secondary roles, not allowing women to reach the media decision-making centers of institutions. This has an impact on producing the content of the discourse they broadcast.

At the same time, a group of religious men, traditional conservative characters tied to religion, political Islam, ideological parties and groups have been formed and organized. Through social media, they are continuously engaged in attacking women's organizations and human rights and women's activists. Through the content of messages they spread on social media and the reactions they show under women activists' posts, they oppose activists. Through this means, they place thousands of inappropriate, fabricated comments and false accusations against women's characters and their organizations with the aim of breaking their image, personal attacks, and paving the way for physical elimination, as some comments are openly threatening. Or through letters, they threaten activists. The clearest example is those threatening letters sent to activist "Shada Bashir" from Women's Media and Culture Organization through an account, containing insults, curses, accusations, psychological harm, and various threats against the activist.

Second: Examples

1. Threats, Harassment, and Defamation of Activists on Social Networks:

Women's activist Bahar Munzir, in an interview with Politics Press, discusses the social redistribution of work in families and defends those women who work daily alongside men while simultaneously bearing the burden of child-rearing and education and carrying out household duties without men sharing or helping in performing their duties.

The interview is 4:57 minutes long and was published on the page on December 12, 2024, at 7:30 PM.

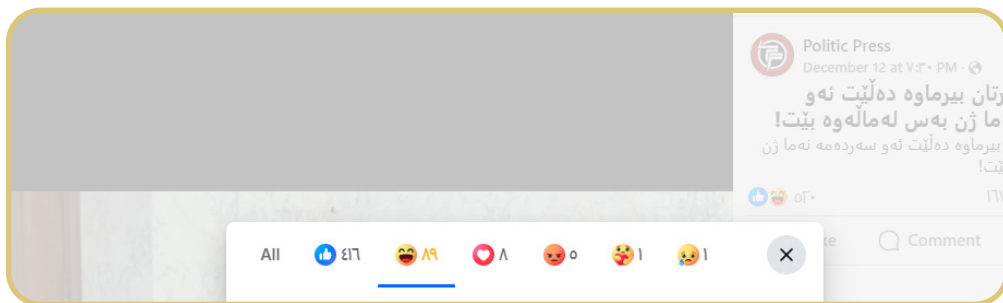


The Politics Press page is a well-known media page. On the social network Facebook, according to the defenders' team monitoring on December 16, 2024, the page has 232 thousand likes and 631 thousand followers.

<https://www.facebook.com/politicpressmedia>



Bahar Munzir's interview received, within four days, from December 12 to December 16, 34 thousand views, 167 comments, and 520 symbolic reactions. Of these, 416 were likes, 89 laughing stickers, 8 hearts, 5 angry reactions, 1 love, and 1 sad reaction. It was also shared 8 times.



Examples of Some Comments:

Osama Aiub:

Markets and malls and even warehouses are full of women who work for little money. They have prevented young men from working instead and building something together, and that woman who accepts slavery outside for 300 thousand, at home she becomes a queen!!

Dr. Mazhar Xorasanî - دکتۆر مه زهه ر خۆراسانی

You want women's rights??? First, create more job opportunities for boys so they can carry out the marriage process and form families, and women can take care of their home. You want women's rights?? Go close the channels and institutions that show Turkish dramas and models and bad people to girls and boys, and because of this, people's moral discipline is broken and they are afflicted with calamity, and women are the first victims. You want women's rights?? Go close the gambling houses, nightclubs and discos that make those places attractive with women, and the heads of hundreds of families are broken, and women are the first victims.

Frmesk Ali:

Blah blah blah enough with liberating women. Free women means home and good life, not outside work all the time.

Muhamad Mahmud:

This woman is European herself, speaking about European women's lives. I'm referring to the woman in the video I posted, not that backward, empty-minded Bahar. Her words are therefore heartbreaking for all feminists, the capitalist system, and secularism, which use dozens of misleading slogans and chants to encourage women to leave home and go outside. They want to make domestic queenship appear unpleasant to women, claiming that home life is slavery and imprisonment, and that by going outside, women become free and gain economic independence!

The reality is that capitalism wants to expand the labor force by drawing girls and women into the workforce, thereby reducing wages and turning them into commodities to serve the upper class. Meanwhile, secularism seeks to spread corruption by removing women from the home and mixing them with the opposite gender, making women more accessible while discouraging marriage

and motherhood, ultimately serving their corrupt agenda. They label serving one's father, brother, husband, and children—which represents the ultimate honor—as slavery, while they call serving customers, colleagues, managers, and employers “freedom” and “liberty.” Consider how deceptive this is! Feminists act as shepherds, implementing the programs of capitalism and secularism.

I do support women becoming doctors, but specifically to treat women and children. I support women becoming teachers in nurseries or girls' schools, wearing Islamic clothing without gender mixing, or working in roles that don't involve mixing and require Islamic dress. However, I still prefer women's queenship at home. What I've described protects both women's dignity and society as a whole. I'm pleased that many girls and women have become aware and understand the dirty schemes and purposes of feminists, capitalism, and secularism. This woman's words have resonated well, speaking to important realities.

Basoz Mhamad:

Intelligent and understanding women never listen to you and examples like you.

طارق نعمان:

Ever since you appeared, you have caused Kurdish women hundreds of problems. Obviously they want your youth and beauty and use you. When you get old, no one looks at you and no one counts on you.

Shirin Ahmed:

Well done, dear Bahar! You've spoken for all women in saying that household work should be socialized and shouldn't always be imposed on women by default. When women work alongside men and contribute to society, then domestic responsibilities should be

shared equally at home as well. Back in the 90s, we advocated and fought for the socialization of bread-making, and fortunately, by the 2000s, more people were buying bread from bakeries instead of making it at home. Keep up the good work!

بهادين بهجت:

You want to be the leading example and encourage women to disobey their husband and become street dishonored girls? Shame on you and your morals.

Baghdf:

Oh, shitty Bahar! Just what we needed.

Sherwan Hashm:

Don't know why those who talk about women's rights or work in women's organizations are either divorced or single (By single in this context he means women who have aged around 40 or 50 and are still not married), and they're all the ugly ones?

Alle Penjweni:

Masculinity is under threat now that women have become breadwinners. The Kurds were ruined the day women started working and constantly telling their husbands "it's my money," which also resulted in men's salaries being cut.

2. Threatening, Cursing, and Harassment Letter Sent to Women's Activist Shada Bashir:

Text of the Letter:

Listen Shada Bashir, Are you sane ****, For real you atheist? I saw you speaking against religion and the niqab. You atheist, you consider yourself part of the organizations that take our and the

nation's money and talk about freedom. But this is your morality. tell me, is it good for people to ban your naked and shameless clothes? Do you want your clothes to be banned too? You came attacking the niqab and that religion... so what have you become?

By the way besides that, how immoral and stupid are you. I mean you should be thankful that you and your examples of athesits and irreligious people are allowed to stay in our country. Why don't you go to the country of atheists where is filled with people like you. If you are honest you and immoral families should go. Besides, you are so immortal are you aware of yourself! I promise I will (f**k) you and your mom.

You cursed shit, are you a human being, I don't know what is going through your head, (F**k) you and your whore parents who raised you all should be more ashamed than this, you shameless ones. After that, if you talk about Kurdish culture, your beautiful clothes are European and have no connection to Kurds, and your clothes are not Kurdish either. What are these words then? Honestly, you make me sick. Honestly, have you looked at your head and face? You look like a monkey? Well then believe it, a monkey is much more beautiful than you. You came with religion, you scold it with that filthy language of yours. Who do you think you are?

Just thank God that we have made room for you in this country of Kurdistan, otherwise you don't belong here. Seriously, why don't you and your shameless father, mother, and family go to a godless country like yourselves... If you're being honest, go, why don't you go? Then it would be a great sin to call you humans. Well, why are you like this I don't understand.

Honestly, I don't understand - with the nation's money, the (PUK; Kurdish political party has created thousands of women's organizations and they're doing improper and inappropriate work.

Seriously, it's right to send someone like you back to where you came from. People have the right to tell the union and government that you've been enriched at the expense of the nation and us, and you've become things, busy with improper work and prostitution, and you came considering yourself an intelligent person. Really, you consider yourself very intelligent and honorable - what are these words?

Hey, you atheist woman, I always laugh on you, and then really, instead of **committing blasphemy go get busy with your immorality, it would be much better.** I wish... damn it, is it not a sin to even call you humans. What are you anyway? Just let me know what you consider yourself. Then after that, you look exactly like a satisfied Mongol, which I really don't know, is that the religion of terrorists? What are you anyway, speaking with that filthy tongue about religion? Then really, it doesn't suit you at all, f*** you and your mother. Damn you, you consider yourself human, meaning you think you're a very honorable person... F*** your whore family. Well, it's clear what you are.

After that, believe me, you're so ugly that if you go out at night, no one will attack you because you're so ugly (laughing emoji). **Believe me, you godless foul-mouthed one are much worse than ISIS, so what are these words?** F*** your dead. I will show you your day, who do you even think you are F*** your ancestors, it is a shame that you are considered a human being.

3. Closure of Zhin TV and Women's Cultural Organizations:

Zhin TV, from March 8, 2018, worked as a specialized channel by women, for women. The channel broadcast daily in different languages. It valued introducing women's talents and contributions, becoming an important platform for developing humanistic discourse.

On December 31, 2024, when legal and judicial institutions were on

holiday, a security force in Sulaymaniyah went to the channel's broadcasting center and imposed a closure decision on them.

On the same day, they also closed the "Free Women of Kurdistan" organization, the "Innovator" organization, and the "Marzya" organization, without having any judicial decision. They also closed "Gaznga Berbayan Company," which was a media content producer for Zhin TV.

4. Harassment, Attacks, and Legal Pressure on Activist Dilsoz Shafiq Khalaf

Dilsoz Shafiq Khalaf, activist and defender of workers' and employees' rights at the "Daben Organization for Democratic Development and Human Rights," was attacked on September 16, 2021, at the Sulaymaniyah Electricity Distribution Directorate building by the acting director "A.H.S.A," who raised his hand to strike her (as stated in Dilsoz Shafiq's testimony).

The cause of the problem was that Dilsoz was an active member in organizing campaigns during the boycotts and protest campaigns expressing dissatisfaction by salary recipients and employees. She participated in demonstrations against administrative and political authority demanding reform and salary provision.

Dilsoz, as a defender on the same day, September 16, 2021, filed a complaint at Investigation Court 7 under number 1721/K/2021 against the director.

In response, the director filed a complaint on November 11, 2021, against Dilsoz. On May 15, 2022, the court of the case issued a decision of three months imprisonment with suspension of the sentence for three years against the activist.

Also within the framework of legal harassment, on September 2, 2023, the Azmer Security Base notified the activist that due to a complaint by the Workers' Union on charges of misusing social media, an arrest warrant

had been issued for her. On September 3, 2023, another complaint was filed against her demanding bail of 50 million Iraqi dinars. All of this was intended to silence her and stop following up on cases defending workers' rights.

See the documents:

هه‌ریمی کوردستان / عێراق

شمارستانی / دادوهری: ١٣ / ٢٠٢٣/ب/٢٥٣٨ ژماره: ٢٠٢٣/ب/٢٥٣٨ رێکمهت: ٠٣/٠٩/٢٠٢٣

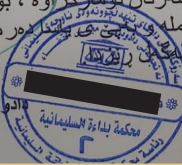


سهرۆكایهتی: [Redacted] سهرۆكایهتی: [Redacted]
 دانگا: [Redacted] دانگا: [Redacted]

پسولهی پێڕاگهیاندننامه

داواکار:	[Redacted]	شهمامی قهناات:	[Redacted]
داوا لهسهرکراو:	رێکخراوی دابین بۆ گهشهپێدانی دیموکراسی و مافی مرۆف	کرێکاران/لقی سلیمانی, سلیمانی	کرێکاران/لقی سلیمانی, سلیمانی
		رێزگاری, شامامی سالم / نزیک کۆڕهک تلیکۆم,	سلیمانی

کاتژمێر: ٠٩:٤٠ ی سهر لهبهیانی رۆژی: ٢٩/١٠/٢٠٢٣ دیارکراوه بۆ بیهینی داواى ژماره (٢٠٢٣/ب/٢٥٣٨) که له لایهن ([Redacted]) لهسهر تان تۆمهت کراوه , بۆیه خۆتان یا بریکارتان له کاتی دیارکراودا له دادگا نامادهبن نهگهر نا دادبینهکه پاشمل.



هه‌ریمی: [Redacted] دادوهر: [Redacted] رێکمهت: ٠٣/٠٩/٢٠٢٣

هاوینچ: ١ - تیانوسی داوا

This official court document from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, issued by the Court of First Instance in Sulaimaniyah (Branch 2), records the execution of a legal decision in case number 5358/2023. The case involves the plaintiff, Worker's union, against the defendants, Dabin Organization, along with their respective guarantors. The letter states that on September 20, 2023, at 9:00 AM, court enforcement officers proceeded to carry out the judgment in the presence of Worker's union. The decision, referencing the original court ruling, authorizes action against the defendants for non-compliance with the debt repayment. The document features the court's official logo, reference numbers, and dates, as well as the judge's signature.

عیراق / ههریمی کوردستان

١٠ دادوهری / سزایی
ژماره: ٢٨٢٠/ك/٢٠٢١
پێكهوت: ١١/١١/٢٠٢١



نهنجی مانی دادوهری
سهرۆكایهتی دادگای تهنهچوونهوهی ناوچهی سلیمانی
دادگای كهوتی ٢

بۆ / دادگای لێكوڵینهوهی ٧

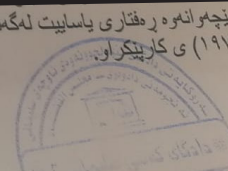
نهم پسهولهی ناگادارکردنهوهیه دههێزین بۆتان بۆ ناگادارکردنهوهیان و گهرانهوهی
پسهولهكان پێش پوژی دادبینی ... لهگهڵ پێژدا

پسهولهی بانگ کردنی شایهت بۆ نامادهبوون

ژماره ی تهنهفون	ناو نیشان	پیشه	ناو	Police station : سهرچنار	Laymen : لایهنهكان
	دیه ستی، سلیمانی	فه رمانیه ر		تۆمهتبار:	
	چوارچرا، شارهوانی			سکاڵاكار:	
	پوژنلوا، سلیمانی			شایهت:	
٠٧٧٠١٩٩٤١٤٠٢	به كره جۆی تازه، سلیمانی	نهنجازیار			

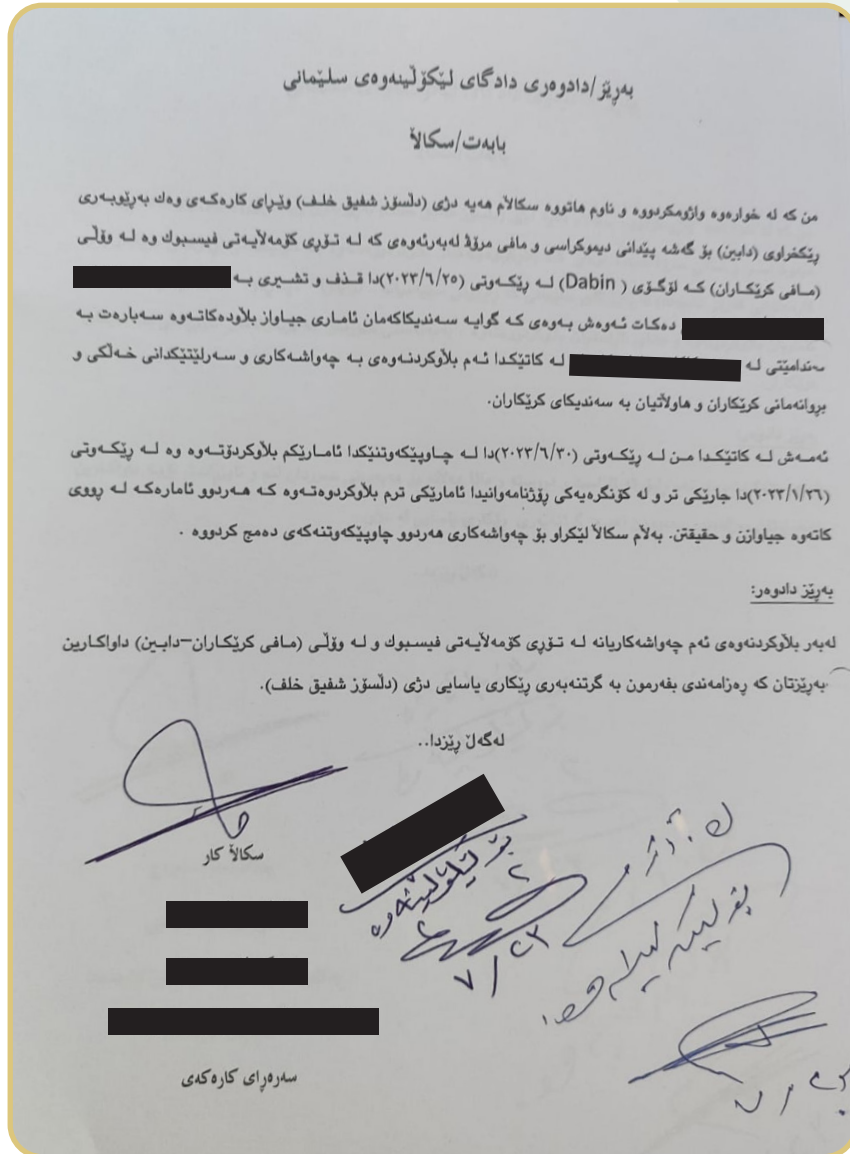
ناگادارت دهكین كه له بهردهم نهم دادگایه نامادیهیت له كاتژمێر ٠٩:٠٠ ی سهرلهیهیانی پوژی ١٧/٠٥/٢٠٢٢ بۆ شایهتیدان له دۆسیه ی سکاڵاكار
له داوای ژماره ٢٨٢٠/ك/٢٠٢١ پهیی مادهی ٢٢٩ سزادان له یاسای سزادانی عیراقی. وه
بههینچهوانهوه رهفکاری یاساییت لهگهڵدا دهكریت به پهی احكامی مادهی (١٧٤) له یاسای بنهماكانی دادگاییكردنه سزاییهكانی ژماره (٢٣) ی سالی
(١٩٧١) ی كاریبكران.

دادوهر: [Redacted]
پێكهوت: ١١/١١/٢٠٢١

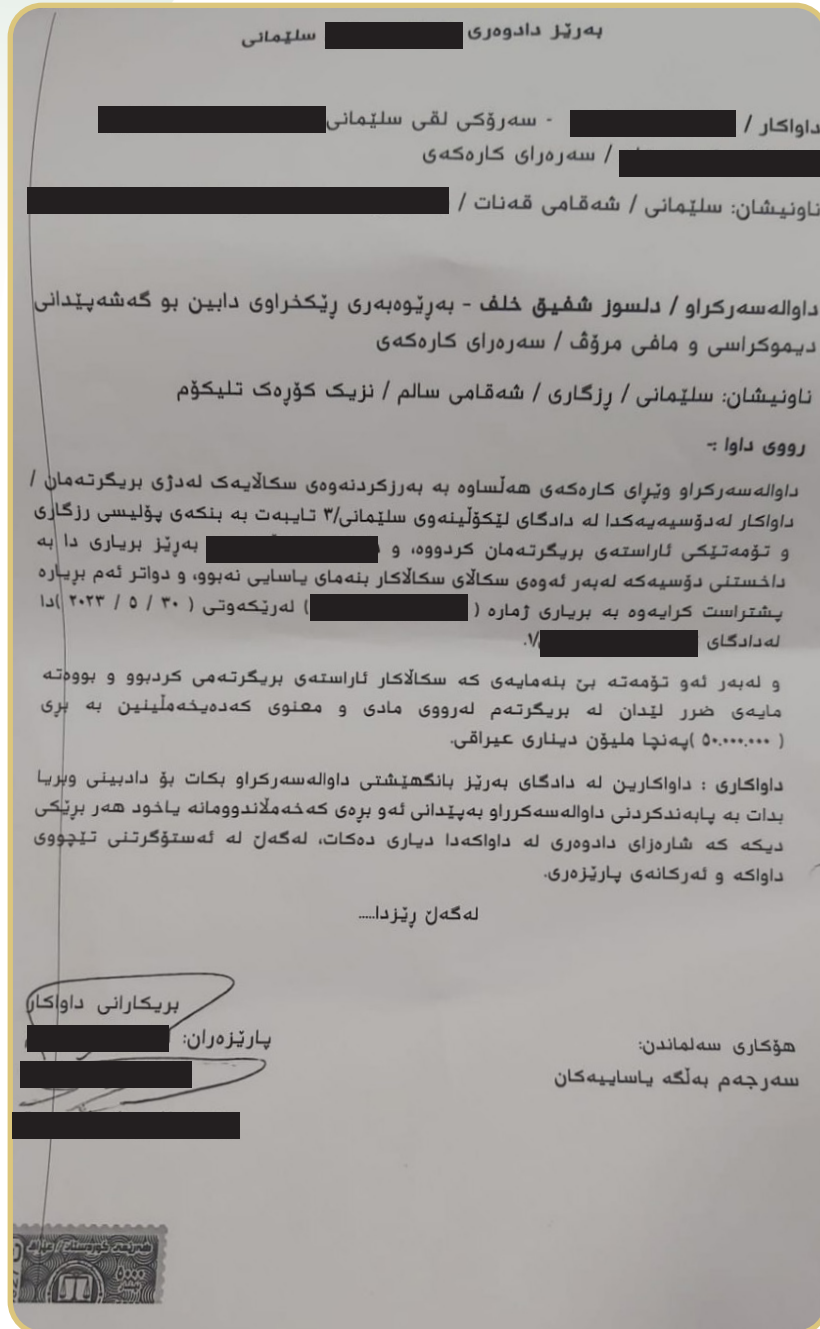


١٤٠٤

This official court document from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, issued by the Court of Enforcement No. 7 in Sulaimaniyah, concerns the execution of a debt-related ruling in favor of the Bank of Kurdistan. Addressed to the Sarchnar Police Station, it names the defendant—Dlsoz Shafiq Khalaf and the complainant Anwar Hamasaiid Abdalla—along with their personal details and contact numbers, as well as a witness, Ata Hussein Faraj. The letter states that on November 22, 2021, at 9:00 AM, court enforcement officers proceeded to implement the decision, which orders their presence in court on the dedicated date with Article 374 of the Civil Procedure Law. It bears the court's official logo, reference numbers, and dates, along with the judge's signature.

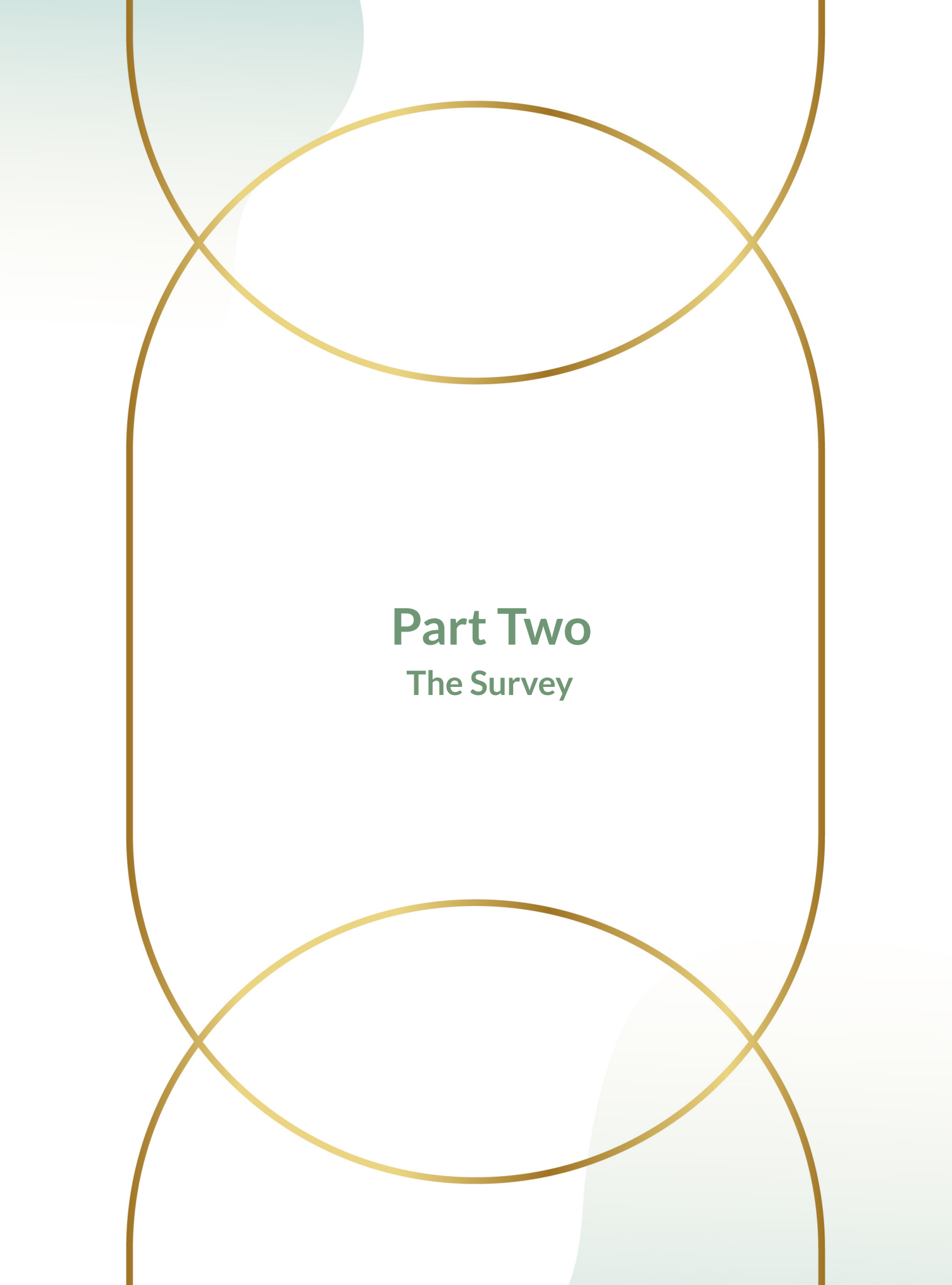


This letter is a formal complaint submitted to the Sulaimaniyah Investigation Court by Chalak Rauf Faraj against (Dilsoz Shafiq Khalaf) general director of Dabin Organization. He alleges that on June 25 and again on June 27, 2023, the accused posted defamatory and insulting statements about the worker's union on Facebook, which she claims were false, damaging to their reputation, and harmful to his family and social standing. The complainant requests the court to take legal action against Miss. Dilsoz Shafiq.



This is a formal defamation lawsuit filed in an Iraqi Kurdish court, where Chalak Rauf Faraj, the President of the Sulaymaniyah Branch of the Federation of Kurdistan Workers' Syndicates, is suing Dilsoz Shafiq Khalaf, Director of Dabinn Organization for Democratic Development

and Human Rights. The case stems from a criminal complaint that Khalaf filed against Faraj's representatives with the Sulaymaniyah Investigation Court and Rizgari Police Station, which was ultimately dismissed by the criminal court in May 2023 for lacking legal basis. Now Faraj is seeking 50 million Iraqi dinars (approximately \$38,000 USD) in damages, arguing that Khalaf's false accusations caused both financial and reputational harm to his representatives. The plaintiff is represented by three lawyers: Azad Mohammed Karim, Dilshad Mahmoud Ahmed, and Zamwa Dhahir Sheikh Sadiq.

The background features a large, light teal shape in the top-left corner and a smaller, similar shape in the bottom-right corner. Two large, overlapping circles with thin gold outlines are centered vertically, creating a frame for the text.

Part Two

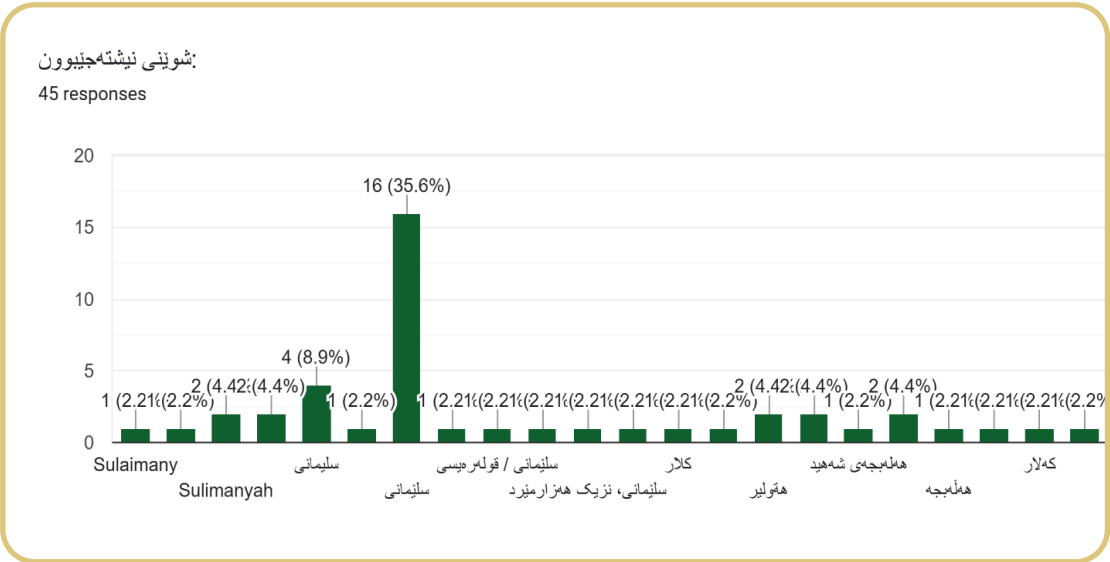
The Survey

The Survey

At the beginning of 2025, the Defend Defenders Network conducted a survey regarding the situation of defenders and the obstacles they face. 45 activists from different areas of the Kurdistan Region participated in the survey. The main objective of the survey was to reveal the situation of defenders and collect information about the challenges that come along their way.

The content of the survey and its results are as follows:

Table Number (1) Place of Residence of Defenders



As shown in Table Number One, it is evident that defenders from the majority of areas of the Kurdistan Region and provinces participated in answering the questions.

Table Number (2) Regarding the Workplace of Defenders

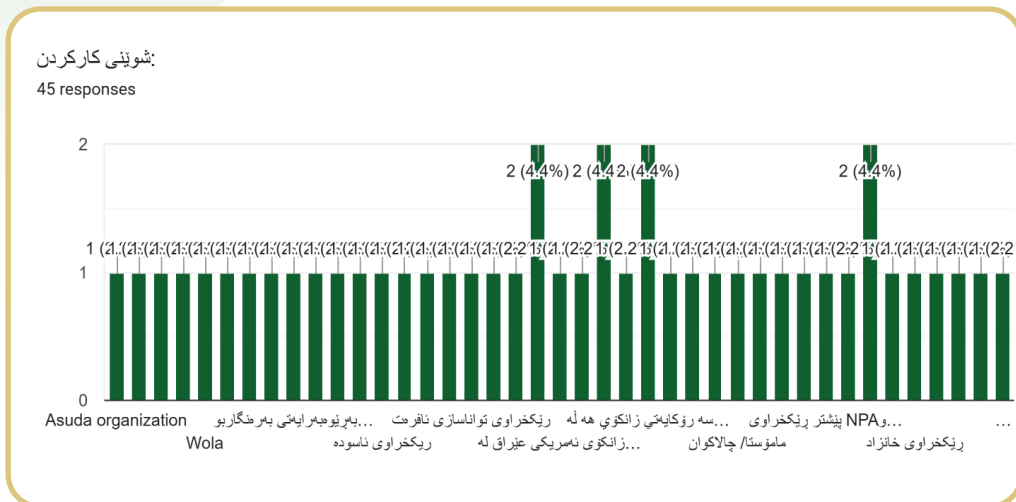
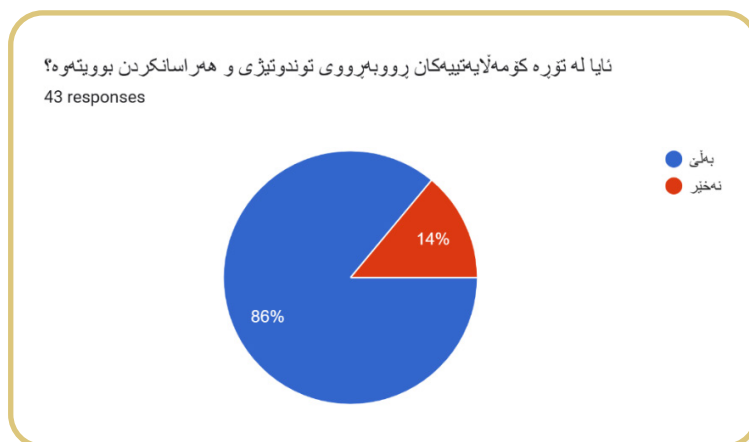


Table Number (2) shows the workplace of those defenders who participated in the survey, and it has emerged that the majority of them work in women's organizations and academic and official institutions specialized in women's issues, and they have close involvement with advocacy issues related to rights and women.

Table Number (3) Facing Violence and Harassment on Social Networks responses



As shown in Table Number (3), 86% of participants have faced harassment and violence on social networks, which is a high percentage, and only 14% indicated that they have not faced such violations. The results of this table show that the vast majority of active women and defenders have faced violations on social networks.

Table Number (4) Feeling Support from Surrounding People

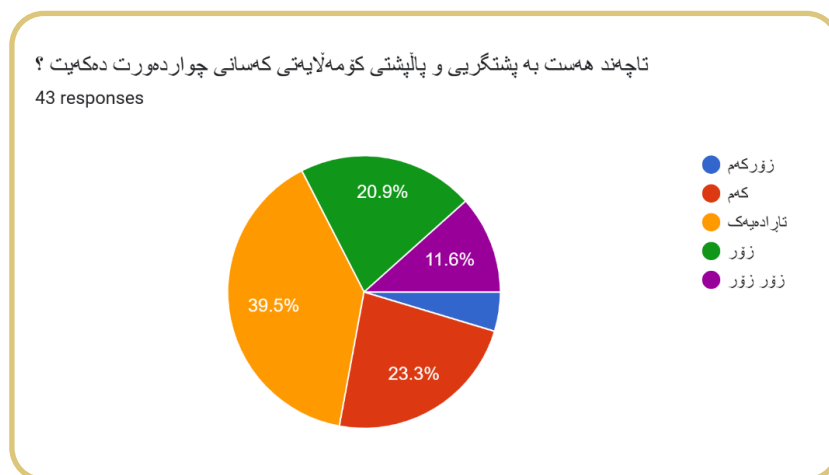


Table Number (4) is specific to revealing the level of support from defenders' surrounding people. As the table shows, in first place and with a percentage of 39.5%, defenders indicated that they feel “somewhat” supported and backed socially by their surrounding people. In second place, with a percentage of 23.3%, they indicated that they receive “little” support. In third place, with a percentage of 20.9%, they indicated that they receive “much” support. Also, 11.6% of participants feel very strong support from their surrounding people, which mostly includes family members, colleagues, and friends from their organizations and workplaces.

Table Number (5) Publishing Clarifications About the Advocacy Actions Undertaken

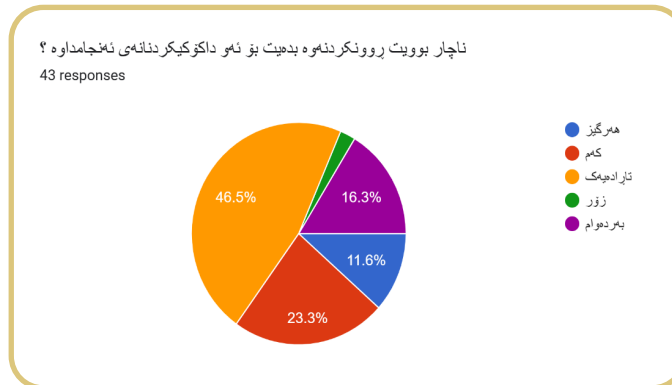


Table Number (5) clarifies how much defenders have published clarifications about the advocacy actions they have undertaken, as after every advocacy action they have faced waves of obstacles and have been forced to give clarifications. The table has clarified that 46.5% of defenders have published clarifications “somewhat,” meaning when they felt it was necessary. 23.3% of defenders took this approach to a “small” degree, but 16.3% of participants revealed that they continuously provided clarifications about their work.

Table Number (6) The Effects of Advocacy on the Normal and Family Life of Defenders

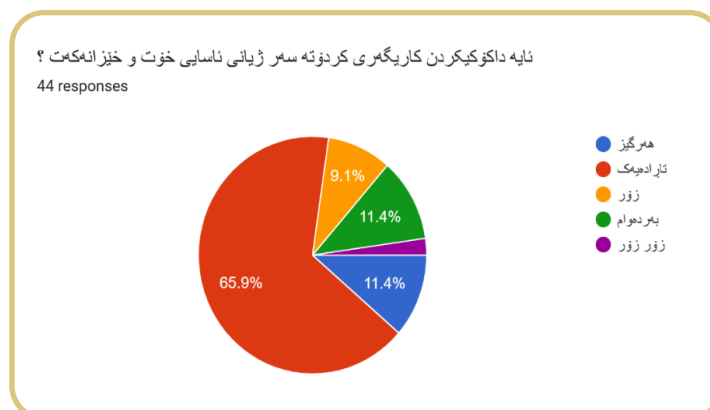


Table Number (6) shows how much the advocacy activities of defenders

for rights advocacy have affected the personal and family lives of the defenders themselves. In a way that 65.9% and in first place, meaning the majority of participants believe that it has “somewhat” affected their family life. Also, 11.4% of participants responded that it has continuously had an impact, and the same percentage said it has “never” had an impact. Of the total participants, 9.1% responded that it has created a significant impact on their family life.

Table Number (7) Types of Violations That Defenders Have Faced

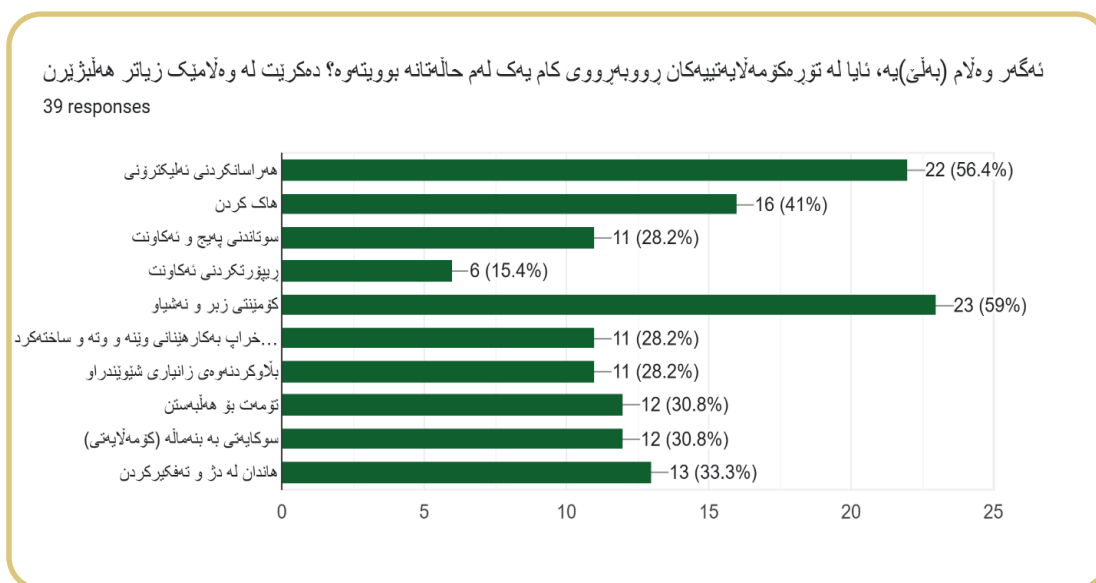


Table Number (7) is specific to the types of violations and situations that defenders have faced. The table shows that in first place and with a percentage of 59%, defenders have faced “harsh and inappropriate comments” on social networks. In second place, 56.4% of participants indicated that they have faced electronic harassment. In third place, 41% of defenders have had attempts made to hack their accounts, emails, computers, and laptops. In fourth place, 33.3% of defenders have faced excommunication and incitement against them. In fifth place, 30.8% of participants have faced accusations and fabrications and insults to their families. Also, in sixth place, 28.2% of participants have faced each of the

following: misuse of images and statements, falsification and spreading of distorted information, and burning of their pages and accounts. Apart from these, 15.4% of participants have faced attacks by social media groups and reporting, so that their pages and accounts would be suspended and they could no longer make their voices heard through their accounts and pages.

Table Number (8) Attitudes and Reactions of Related Parties at the Level of Violations

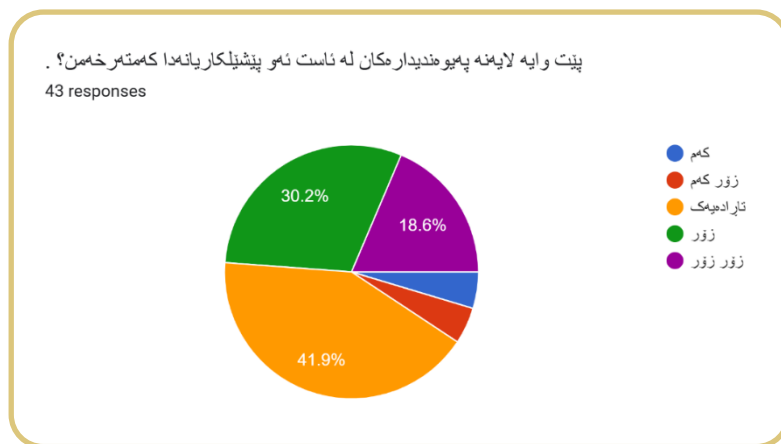


Table Number (8) is specific to the reactions and attitudes of related parties regarding the violations committed against defenders. As shown in the table, in first place and with a percentage of 41.9%, participants believe that related parties are “somewhat” indifferent at the level of those violations. In second place and with a percentage of 30.2%, participants believe that related parties are “very” indifferent. In third place, with a percentage of 18.6%, participants believe that related parties are “extremely” indifferent. This expresses the situation that defenders have faced, but related parties have not made the issue of those violations their main concern. Therefore, nearly 90% of participants believe that related parties are “extremely, very, somewhat” indifferent at the level of violations.

Table Number (9) Filing Complaints

نایا بۇ داکوکی له خۆت سکالآت له دژی حالتهکانی توندوتیژی و پێشکار بیهکان تۆمار کردووه؟
44 responses

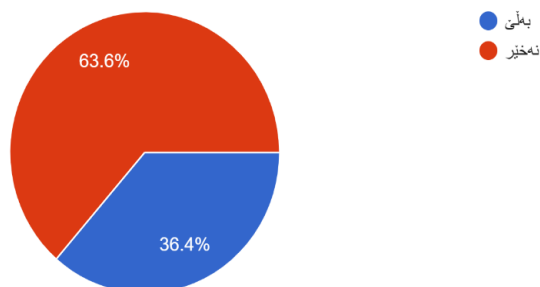


Table Number (9) clarifies to what extent defenders have resorted to filing complaints when violations occur against them. According to the participants' responses, 63.6% of participants, which comprises the majority, have not filed complaints when any violation occurred against them. Also, 36.4% of participants indicated that they have filed complaints. This is a low percentage compared to the violations committed against activists and defenders.

Table Number (10) Recovery of Rights Through Legal Complaints

نەگەر وەلامهکەت به بەڵێ یه، وەلامی لایەنه پهیوهندیدار مەکان پۆلیس، دادگا و مە پێویست بوو بۆ دۆسییهکەت و تۆنراوه مافت بۆ
بگێڕدرێتەوه؟
20 responses

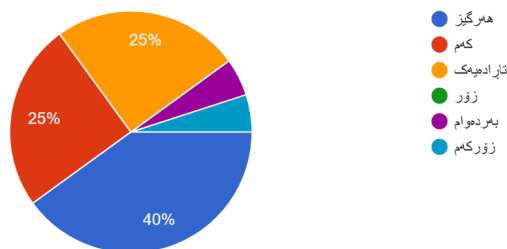


Table Number (10) clarifies that from the total percentage of 36.4% of

defenders who filed complaints in Table Number (9), the response of related parties and follow-up on their cases was as follows: In first place and with a percentage of 40%, they indicated that “never” did the related parties, police, and courts respond as necessary, and their rights were not recovered. 25% of participants in second place said that they received “little” and “somewhat” response and their rights were able to be restored. This can be considered as a main reason for defenders not resorting to court and police procedures, as the majority of those who took this route “never” reached their rights and were not given the necessary response.

Table Number (11) Effects of Violence on Defenders

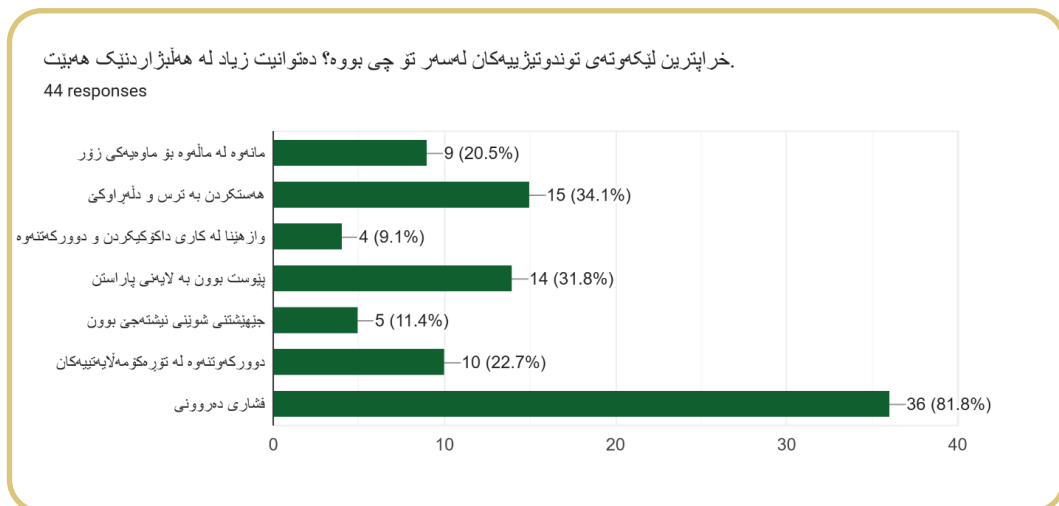


Table Number (11) presents the details of those consequences that have occurred due to violence, and according to the survey results, in first place and with a percentage of 81.8% of participating defenders, they indicated that psychological pressure has been created on them. In second place and with a percentage of 34.1%, participants revealed that due to their work, they have felt fear and anxiety. In third place, with a percentage of 31.8%, participants have needed self-protection measures. In fourth place, with a percentage of 22.7%, participants have been forced to distance themselves from social networks. In fifth place, with a percentage

of 20.5%, they have been forced to stay home for extended periods. Also, in sixth place, with a percentage of 11.4%, due to threats and pressures, they have been forced to change their place of residence, and in seventh place, with a percentage of 9.1%, they have been forced to abandon advocacy work and abstain from working in the field of defending rights.

Conclusion

- The majority of defenders who participated were activists from human rights and women's organizations and academics, with some of them serving in scientific and public centers.
- 86% of survey participants have faced harassment and violence on social networks, which shows that social networks have become a main platform for attacks, assaults, and tarnishing the images of activists and civil society organizations.
- Those defenders who face pressure and attacks do not feel support and assistance from related parties to a significant degree, and some of them are only supported by their surrounding people.
- The majority of participating defenders have been forced to respond somewhat to those attacks made against them, and a significant portion of the responses have been clarifications for the rumors, propaganda, and psychological warfare conducted against defenders.
- Carrying out activities and working as a defender of rights has created obstacles for the defenders themselves, and 65.9%, meaning the majority of participants, believe that their work has "somewhat" affected their family life.
- The majority of defenders have faced "harsh and inappropriate comments" on social networks. Also, more than half of the defenders participating in the survey revealed that they have faced electronic harassment, apart from hacking attempts, excommunication, and insults to their families.
- Defenders believe that related parties have not given proper attention to the dangers they face. In a way that 41.9% of participants

believe that related parties are “somewhat” indifferent at the level of those violations. In second place, 30.2% of participants believe that related parties are “very” indifferent. In third place, 18.6% of participants believe that related parties are “extremely” indifferent.

- Due to lack of trust in related parties, 63.6% of participants, which comprises the majority, have not filed complaints when any violation occurred against them. This is a reason for not giving importance to this issue and further neglect by related parties.
- Those defenders who resorted to courts and filed complaints, 40% indicated that “never” did the related parties, police, and courts respond as necessary, and their rights were not recovered. 25% of participants in second place said that they received “little” and “somewhat” response and their rights were able to be restored.
- The majority of defenders who advocate for issues, 81.8% have had psychological pressure created on them. Also, 34.1% have felt fear and anxiety due to their work.

Recommendations

- Defenders need the provision of a suitable environment for work so they can advocate for cases and victims of violence with the support of legal text.
- It is important to make necessary and comprehensive reforms in Kurdish media discourse and purify that discourse from opposing organizations and characters and women's and rights activists so that the level of social development is raised and society becomes familiar with the importance and role of defenders.
- Institutions and related parties must have the necessary awareness about the role, duties, and characteristics of defenders and be supportive and helpful in advancing their activities.
- Political and administrative authority in the Kurdistan Region must have comprehensive understanding of the role, position, and characteristics of defenders and be closely involved in protecting and providing legal support to defenders.
- It is the duty of defenders to deal diligently with all those attacks, harassment, defamation, and threats they face daily and take necessary measures to defend themselves legally.
- More work needs to be done legally to amend the domestic violence law and journalism work law in the Kurdistan Region, as well as new laws regarding regulating publication issues on social networks.

Appendix

1. Text of the Statement for Announcing the Defend Defenders Network

Women and men seeking equality Distinguished attendees, Supporters of advancing civil struggle

We, as women and men seeking equality, organizations defending women's rights, children's rights, and human rights, always consider civil struggle through the right and proper path to be for advocating for rights and freedom and confronting any injustice and oppression carried out on the basis of discrimination and inequality.

The path of this struggle and advocacy is never easy. Often defenders face severe threats and unstable conditions, with no place to be a refuge and supporter.

Therefore, today we, a group of women and men on the path of civil struggle, in your honorable presence, announce the "Defend Defenders Network," which was established on August 12, 2024, upon the proposal of the People's Development Organization.

The network consists of a number of civil society organizations, women's organizations, activists, and lawyers. The purpose of establishing this network is to support those activists who face obstacles, threats, and harassment due to their defense of human rights and women's rights.

The work plan of this network is to stand by defenders in difficult and hard times.

From this year, this network records reports of violations, threats, and obstacles facing defenders and publishes them at press conferences for public opinion and related parties.

The Defense Network gives importance to strengthening defenders' capacity for self-protection from any danger that puts their lives at risk

and provides them with “psychological, social, and legal” support.

At the same time, the network works through a series of activities to advance the capacity and abilities of defenders so they can increasingly confront social and technical obstacles and pressures.

From here, we call upon civil society organizations and activists in the fields of defending human rights, children’s rights, and women’s rights in general, whenever there is any kind of pressure, obstacle, threat, or danger to their lives, dignity, and personality, to contact the Defend Defenders Network, so that together we can make this network a refuge for all defenders and a means of conveying their voice and message.

To contact the Defend Defenders Network:

Mobile numbers: 07765126372 07517696598

Email: defenddefenders6@gmail.com

Our respect and love, Defend Defenders Network Sulaymaniyah
December 5, 2024

2. Screenshots of a Number of Comments:

(Under each photo the English translation of some of the comments is provided):



Kazhaw Hawary:

You guys will go back home after getting drunk at 1 am

Bilal Hawlery:

If the woman is truly a good woman will never listen to these

Amanj Jamel:

I will tell mala Mazhar On you

Hasan M Zangana:

This who so calls herself an activist we should ask her how many times she has been divorced.

Hiwa Muh:

After that, she should not imitate the casual monkey-like Western culture and should return to her traditional home for her own benefit, not like Western women who become worthless tools!! Kurdish women have their own respect, status, and dignity, and they are very free and more valuable than all the women in the world. They do their work, housekeeping, and child-rearing beautifully, and they have good education as well. Besides that, they are equal to men at the scientific level and have high achievements, so we men consider them as our leaders in many things... A woman is not just a woman, she is a human being, and everywhere in the world there are good and bad people.



Ali:

What is she hallucinating

Bilal Rashid:

Shame on the woman who lets these empty, worthless, and useless words of yours get into her head. She should be in court once every six months.

Hallaj Taher:

The biggest dinosaur in history.

Farsh Shwri Sadqi:

1. This old woman, the troubles that haven't happened to her personally, she wants to inflict on other people. 2. These media people, when someone falls into their hands to be criticized more, they have no problem as long as it serves their own benefit.

Muhamad Abdulsalam:

Shame on the woman who lets these words of yours get into her head

Ahmad Haji Salih:

What is her job outside?


Rokan Kalary
 نه مه باسير بخواو زورنا لن بدا

3d Like Reply


Surchy HZR
 به هار چ که سیکه تا موسلمانان گوپی بۆ بگرن !!!؟؟

2d Like Reply


أبو أسماء
 ده بئ نه وفکره بۆگه نه ت له گه ل خۆت ببه ی ته یناوگۆر هه ی ریسوای هیچو یوچ

1h Like Reply


Daban Karem
 نه م ئافره ته خۆی له نه رویچ نه زی بۆ نه وه هاتۆته وه به ره لای بڵاو بکاته وه نه گینا خۆی باوه ری به خواو پیغه مبه ر نی یه کۆمۆنیسته ، ئیستاش نازانی شاهه تومان بئینیت

3d Like Reply


Dara Risha
 ئیش که ی توش هیلاکته

3d Like Reply


Dldar Heart
 تا نه و سه رده مه ی ژن له ماله وه بوو حورمه توو نامووسوو شه ره ف هه بوو ژن به ریزوو بوو قوتابخانه بوو ئیستا هه موو مان ده بینین چ ده گوزه ریت

3d Like Reply


NaaDr Lak
 ئینکاری و دژی ئیسلام نه بئ وه لای کهس جه زی به وشته نه یه

1d Like Reply


Muhamad S Muhamad
 ده گوبخۆ کۆنه حیز

Surchy HZR:

Who Bahar thinks she is to have Muslims listen to her”

Abu Asma:

You should take that rotten thought with you to the grave, you worthless and empty disgrace.

Daban Karem:

This woman lives in Norway, that's why she came back to spread falsehood. She doesn't believe in God and the Prophet, she's a communist, and now she doesn't even know how to bear witness [likely referring to Islamic testimony/shahada].

Dldar Heart:

Until the time when women stayed at home, there was respect, honor, and dignity. Women were respected and were like schools [meaning they were sources of learning/wisdom]. Now we all see what is happening.



Shex Hazim:

It's a lie, let her go do manual labor work] and let me know if she can carry it on both shoulders or not

Hema Kamal:

Congratulations, now you have to work three shifts outside

Foad Agh:

Congratulations Bahar Dear, I loved your words.

Omar Hassan Ranya:

Let alone the men, they don't listen to you at all, and women don't give you any consideration either."

Ros Rahel:

A woman is beautiful when she has a child in her arms and her only concern is the return of her tired husband, not a woman who shows her 32 teeth to her boss and has exposed 90% of her body to please her employer. And our poor young man can't even get paid for his work. Women working outside is the cause of 99% of marital infidelity. The woman is so concerned with pleasing her male boss that she's not as concerned about her husband and children.

Nabard Nabax:

Please don't follow these misogynistic creatures because your page has viewers. If you post such vile news/content, we will be forced to block you.

Arkan Slemani:

That's when a woman lost her dignity - when she came outside and was no longer the lady of her own house.



Bashdar Ahmad:

This is the dinosaur

Shamal Raza:

is she happy outside

Hero Salh:

She is right, see how we are running around all the time.

Sardar Salih Hamaxan:

You are ruining society.

Mohammed Othman:

She should have been asked this question too: does working outside make it any easier for women or harder.



Adam Rami:

Stop misleading women

Deary Mohamad:

Shut your mouth, beautiful. A woman's honor lies in doing housework and taking care of children. It is obligatory for a man to earn for his house and children and not let them lack anything. If a man loves his wife, if a father loves his daughter, he doesn't allow

her to work outside. The husband or father has the responsibility - it's a rule that he should give money and provide expenses. This way, there's no chaos at home and the family structure doesn't fall apart.

Rzgar Ahmad:

Every time a woman tries to work outside, know that she has made her burden twice as heavy. In addition to the problems she faces outside, there are thousands of problems that lead to the destruction of her home, for which regret cannot compensate. There are many living examples. If a woman wants to prove her strength, then let her fulfill her duties at home properly - then everyone will look at her with respect. Those who advocate for that freedom and liberation are not prepared to let their own daughters do such work.



Sirwan Asi:

Oh, those who are shameless have nothing left - they themselves have collapsed psychologically and socially, so now they want to deceive women too. The day will come when even their names won't remain.

Bawky Harwn gyan:

Well, their situation is good, but they want to lead astray - they want to encourage women and girls, encourage our women toward

corruption. Who accepts this except people like themselves? God has honored women to be like queens in the home, to be respected, not to come out and become cheap and disgraced, to become the subject of gossip by strangers. Later comes divorce, separation, and social problems. All their efforts are to destroy the class of lioness women - those who take pride in being women, not in being men.

Mustafa Wria:

Just so you know, In the western communities there is a movement that is about to bring the patriarchy back.

The screenshot shows a social media thread with the following comments:

- Ahmad Majid Herki:** والله هنگو دايكا زنا گا ویت وەلئ هاتین چاوئ وان وئل دەستئ سەلاحە رەش هەتا پینج هزارات دەتئ هەمی گاوئ دەستئ سەلاح ویت ناودا 🤔
- Rekan Sabah:** وەلاهی ئەنگو زنتان ناشرین کرد ئەنگو زنتان فبیری فیلەر و بوتوکس و مۆدیل کرد ئەنگو زنتان فبیری بەرەلایی کرد ئەنگو ریزەیی تەراقتان زیاد کرد ، رەنگ و روویی مەیمونت گرتیە دارزیی، باب و برات ج نیینە میردت ج نییە ئەگەرنا دەبی زمانت بێرن لەسەر ئەو قسانە
- Xalil Hassan:** بەئاواتەو سەرئەننەو !
دەیان سألە ئەم قەوانە شرە لئ ئەیهەنەو و هیچ بەدەستەو !
- Pshtiwan Shekhani:** ئەو مئ بەرازە هیچی بۆ ئافرەت لانیە. جگە لە بەرەلایی
- Hawbir A Abdulla:** راستە کات بۆی بە لاو بی خاوە ن بن وە ک خۆی افرەت هی اوە یە بیاویک بیاوبیت خزمەتی کات نە هیللیت بێتە دە رە وە بۆ ایش بۆ دە وام کیشە نیە دامە زریت نە ک ایش کردن و خویری بیاو تە ماعی تیکات افرەت هی ایش کردن نیە هی اوە ی خزمەتی کە یت نە ک او بجیت تۆ مل بانیکي خویری زن بارەت بۆ بە یا کات
- Zanko Zanst:** ئافرت لە دەروە خزمەتی خەلک بکات لە بارو کافترباو چیشخانەکان قاپ بشوات و نان دانی و لە وتیل ژۆرەکان پاک بکات وەو سیستەمی نوستن و بەتانی بشوات ئەمە مافە و پیشکەوتنە..... بەلام لە مالهەو خزمەتی مال و مندالی خۆی بکات ئەوە ئن کەیلەیه دواکەوتەو

Rekan Sabah:

I swear to God, you have made women look ugly, you have taught women about fillers and botox and modeling, you have taught women to go astray, you have increased your divorce rate, you have

taken on the color and appearance of monkeys and are falling apart, you have no father or brother, you have no husband - otherwise your tongue should be cut out for those words."

Xalil Hassan:

You will die wishing for this! You have been repeating this for years now and you haven't come up with anything.



Osama Aiub:

Markets and malls and even warehouses are full of women who work for little money. They have prevented young men from working instead and building something together, and that woman

who accepts slavery outside for 300 thousand, at home she becomes a queen!!

Dr. Mazhar Xorasanî - دکتۆر مەزھەر خۆراسانی

You want women's rights??? First, create more job opportunities for boys so they can carry out the marriage process and form families, and women can take care of their home. You want women's rights?? Go close the channels and institutions that show Turkish dramas and models and bad people to girls and boys, and because of this, people's moral discipline is broken and they are afflicted with calamity, and women are the first victims. You want women's rights?? Go close the gambling houses, nightclubs and discos that make those places attractive with women, and the heads of hundreds of families are broken, and women are the first victims.

Frmesk Ali:

Blah blah blah enough with liberating women. Free women means home and good life, not outside work all the time.

Muhamad Mahmud:

This woman is herself from Europe talking about European women's life. I mean the woman I put in the video, not that backward empty-minded Bahar. Therefore her words are heartbreaking for all feminists and the capitalist system and secularism that with dozens of misleading slogans and chants encourage women to leave home and go outside, and they want to make home queenship life unpleasant before women's eyes and say home life is slavery and prison, and by going outside you become free and become the owner of independent economy.! While capitalism wants to increase the labor force by taking girls and women outside and reduce wages and make them commodities and put them at the service of the upper class, and secularism wants to spread corruption by taking them outside and mixing them with the opposite gender so they

can reach women sooner, and not allow marriage and put women in motherhood and put them at the service of their dirty purposes, and serving father and brother or husband and child which is the ultimate pride, but they call it slavery, while serving customers and people and managers and employers they call freedom and liberty. Think how misleading they are, and feminists are shepherds of women and implement the program of capitalism and secularism. I agree with women being doctors but being doctors for women or children, and women being teachers, teachers for nurseries or girls' schools with Islamic clothing without mixing, or work that doesn't involve mixing and with Islamic clothing, but still I prefer women's queenship at home. What I mentioned is protecting women's dignity and society too. I'm happy that many girls and women have become aware and understood the dirty plan and purpose of feminists and capitalism and secularism. This woman's words also had a good echo that talks about some realities.



Surkew Rashid:

Bringing women Outside to work among men, only ruins families.



(Book Reading) - خویندنه وهی کتیب

Opposingly, your time you atheists has ended, no one believes in you women are going back to their religion day by day and become more religious commitment.

Eshy Dast:

Yes, send the men back home!. They turn into women, that is why they have lost their honor, then you as women go collapse the government, men will have honor to go collapse the government". (This is an unclear comment, I believe he wants to say that women can be rebellious!)

Lawe Abdullah:

Listen carefully to this woman, she is outside working, see her sufferings”

3. Examples of some media violations that have distorted the image of women and their organizations:



This is a post about a kurdish Professor; Dr. Anwar Sheikha who gets married to a woman 41 years younger than him. The below comments are criticizing him:



(Real Madrid and Crisitano Ronaldo fans C7) هاندهرانی ریال مه درید و کریستیانو پۆنالدۆ C7:

If this were to be done by a religious leader (Moula) all the women's organizations would have barked on him like dogs, but since he is a secular and rick no one dares to speak up.

(Brighton Fans) - هاندهرانی بریتۆن:

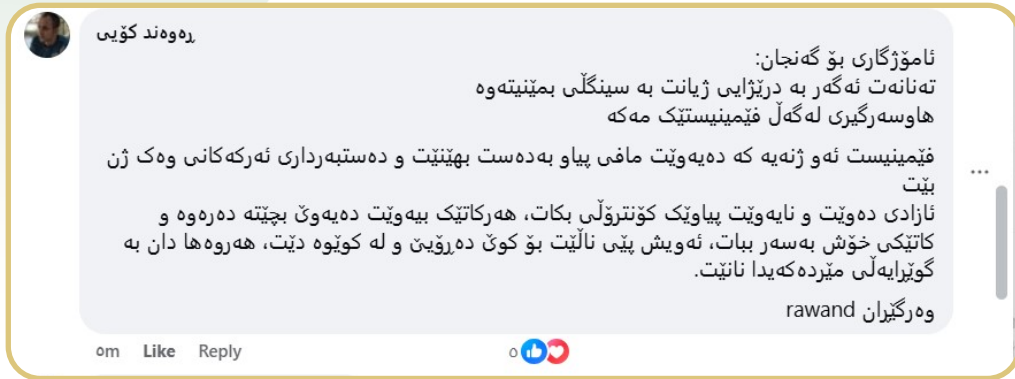
If this were to be done by a religious leader (Moula) all the atheists would have scolded him”.

(Karov Abdullah) - کاروخ عبدالله:

Money changed a lot of people, human beings have turned into tools, hatred on capitalism.

Darya Akram:

He just makes himself a joke, he is very hapy with what he is doing.



Rawand Koyie:

My advice for the young people:

Even if you stay single your entire life don't get married with a feminist. Feminist is someone who wants to take men's rights and leave her duties as a woman behind.

She wants freedom and she doesn't want a man who controls her, she wants to go out whenever she wants and have fun. She wants a man who doesn't tell her where have you been or where are you going. And she doesn't obey her husband.



My wife is expired I want to marry another one.



In a live broadcast, the Erbil Police spokesperson sends the footage video of the moment of killing of the Arab girl and the arrest of the killer.



Due to adultery and following a woman's complaint, a former female presenter of one of the satellite channels was arrested at Koya Court.

A source from Koya Court announced that a former presenter of one of the media channels has been detained by the court.

The source said the charge against the presenter is adultery, which was filed as a complaint by another woman after videos of her husband came to light.

The story unfolded as follows: the presenter had a relationship with a man and recorded videos with him, then sent the videos to the man's wife. The wife then filed a complaint against both the presenter and her husband.

In addition to being a presenter, this person has participated in several artistic works and dramas. At the same time, her husband passed away some time ago.



پیکراوی خەڵک بۆ گەشەپێدان People's Development Organization

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