

URGENT ACTION

KURDISH DETAINEE ON HUNGER STRIKE IN IRAQ

A 36-year-old man currently on hunger strike has been detained without charge or trial for 20 months in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. He was held in solitary confinement for the first three months and repeatedly beaten. The authorities accuse him of leaking information about election rigging to a newspaper.

Niaz 'Aziz Saleh, who is married with two daughters, has been on hunger strike for the last two months, protesting against his detention. His family have appointed two lawyers to defend him but they are unable to do anything while he has not been formally charged. Further, the lawyers were prevented by the Asayish (main security forces in the region) from visiting Niaz 'Aziz Saleh in detention.

Niaz 'Aziz Saleh was working as a registry official in the headquarters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Salahuddin near Erbil. On 5 January 2012 security officials belonging to the Parastin, the intelligence service of the KDP arrested him from his office. His family did not know anything about his fate or whereabouts until they eventually received a phone call from a security official in the Asayish Gishti (the main security forces) in Erbil telling them that he was held there and they could visit. The family learned that Niaz 'Aziz Saleh had been beaten repeatedly during interrogation while held in solitary confinement for about three months.

In 2011 Levin magazine, a weekly newspaper issued in Sulaymania, published articles detailing how the 2009 parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan region of Iraq had been rigged by the KDP. The magazine managed to obtain confidential party information and KDP officials suspect that Niaz 'Aziz Saleh leaked this information. Niaz 'Aziz Saleh has now spent about 20 months detained without charge or trial.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to release Niaz 'Aziz Saleh or to charge him with an internationally recognizable criminal offence. He should immediately be informed of the reason of his detention and brought before a court to challenge the lawfulness of this detention;
- Urging the authorities that he is given immediate access to lawyers of his own choosing and regular family visits as well as any medical care he may need;
- Urging that an independent and impartial investigation into allegations that he had been beaten be set up and those found responsible be brought to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 OCTOBER 2013 TO:

President

Masu'd Barzani
Diwan, P.O. Box 60
Erbil
Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Salutation: Your Excellency

Prime Minister

Nechirvan Barzani
Kurdistan Regional Government
Erbil
Republic of Iraq
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of the Interior

Karim Sinjari
Kurdistan Regional Government
Erbil
Republic of Iraq
Salutation: Your Excellence

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq has enjoyed a semi-autonomous status since 1991. Two main parties have dominated the political life in the region. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Mas'ud Barzani controls the governorates of Erbil and Dohuk. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Iraq's President Jalal Talabani, controls the Sulaimaniya governorate. Mas'ud Barzani is the President of the region and currently his nephew Nechirvan Barzani is the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Kurdish security agencies (Asayish, Parastin and Zinyari) and the armed forces (Peshmerga) are directly or indirectly controlled by the two parties.

Generally the security situation in this region has been considerably better than the rest of Iraq. While the human rights situation has improved in recent years there are still ongoing violations carried out by the security forces, including arbitrary arrest, long-term detention without trial, torture and unfair trial. Anti-government activists are harassed and sometimes detained and tortured. In 2011 for example thousands of protesters took to the street and called for an end to corruption, unemployment and poor government services, and for the introduction of political reforms, social justice and respect for human rights and freedoms. They complained about the political and economic control exercised by the two political parties that have been in power since 1991. Six protestors died as a result of unnecessary or excessive use of force by the security forces and a number of people were detained and some were allegedly tortured.

Name: Niaz 'Aziz Saleh
Gender m/f: M

UA: 229/13 Index: MDE14/015/2013 Issue Date: 20 August 2013