

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED

On 8 October 2019, armed men suspected of belonging to the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) abducted Ali Jaseb Hattab al-Heliji, a 29-year-old lawyer representing arrested protesters, in Baghdad, Iraq. To date, Ali Jaseb Hattab al-Heliji's fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Dr. Yassin Taher al-Yassiri

Minister of Interior

Al-Kailan neighbourhood behind Al-Shaab Stadium

Baghdad

Iraq

Email: infor@moi.gov.iq

Your Excellency,

On 8 October 2019, **Ali Jaseb Hattab al-Heliji**, a 29-year-old lawyer, received a call from a woman asking to meet for work in a central area of Ammarah in al-Mayssan governorate. On the same day, Ali met the with the prospective client as agreed. Shortly after, armed men in two black pick-up trucks suspected of belonging to the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) dragged him away from his car and drove him away in one of the trucks.

According to information obtained by Amnesty International, the armed men are believed to belong to a faction of the PMU and targeted Ali Jaseb Hattab al-Heliji because of his work representing protesters and for speaking out on social media about violations committed by the PMU against protesters. Two days before this ambush, two armed men from the PMU came to his home to threatening to kill him if he did not stop speaking out about protesters' killings on Facebook. Members of the PMU also threatened his relatives when they attempted to report the incident.

Since the beginning of the mass protests across the country, many journalists and activists have been threatened and targeted, as well as abducted and forcibly disappeared. Authorities have failed to carry out independent and impartial investigations into the violations committed against activists, journalists and other peaceful protesters. There is evidence that security forces may be involved in the campaign to intimidate and silence protesters, activists and journalists.

I call on you to urgently use all resources at your disposal to find Ali Jaseb Hattab al-Heliji and secure his safe release, immediately investigate his abduction as an enforced disappearance, in accordance with Iraq's obligations under international human rights law, and to keep his family informed of developments in the investigation on a regular basis and in a timely manner.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 1 October 2019, mass protests broke out across Iraq fuelled by high rates of unemployment and perceptions of widespread corruption. Peaceful protesters were met with unlawful and excessive force, including tear gas, live ammunition and sniper fire. In addition to unlawful killings of protesters, Iraqi security forces have beaten, arrested and forcibly disappeared activists, lawyers and journalists. There have been over [400 documented deaths and more than 19,000](#) injured since October. [Amnesty International has been documenting cases of abduction and enforced disappearances of activists and journalists since the beginning of the protests.](#)

In the case of Ali Jaseb Hattab al-Heliji, his family reported the incident to the local police station as well as the Iraq National Security Service (Amn al-Watani). Authorities have told Ali's family that they have started an investigation but it has not led to his release or to informing his family of his whereabouts. The PMU are comprised of large, well-established militia groups, which were officially designated as part of the Iraqi armed forces in February 2016.

Amnesty International continues to document an array of violations against activists and protesters. Most recently on 7 December 2019, [a convoy of pick-up trucks carrying gunmen started shooting at protesters in Tahrir Square in Baghdad killing at least 20 and injuring more than 130.](#)

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic and English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 27 January 2020

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Ali Jaseb Hattab al-Heliji (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: n/a