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Iraq Kurdistan Region: Prime Minister makes encouraging promises to Amnesty International

Amnesty International welcomes the strong commitment to human rights expressed by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani in a meeting with the organization in Erbil today.

"The Prime Minister said he has personally read Amnesty International's report, published last week, and has instructed that its recommendations be circulated to the detention authorities and to government ministries," said Malcolm Smart, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Region and head of Amnesty International's delegation in the Kurdistan Region. "The Prime Minister assured us too of his determination to ensure that the Asayish and other security agencies, whose record we have criticized, are made fully accountable under the law."

At the meeting, Prime Minister Barzani told Amnesty International that a new law was being prepared to make the Asayish accountable to the Council of Ministers, though the timetable for this was still unclear.

The Prime Minister also assured Amnesty International that he and his government are committed to stamping out so-called honour crimes and to ensure that women are afforded effective protection against violence, including within the family.

"The Kurdistan Regional Government has taken positive human rights steps in recent years," said Malcolm Smart. "In particular, it has put in place concrete measures to combat violence against women, and we are heartened by this. At the same time, we emphasized the need to ensure that women's human rights defenders are fully involved in all stages of developing and implementing policies to end violence, discrimination and to increase life opportunities for women and girls."

Amnesty International's visit to the Kurdistan Region follows the publication last week of its report, [Hope and Fear: Human rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#).

The report described recent improvements including the release of hundreds of long term political detainees in 2008 and legal reforms affecting the status of women and media freedom but expressed concern about serious violations by the Asayish and other security forces and called for them to be held fully to account.

Note to Editors:

Malcolm Smart, director of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Said Boumedouha, Iraq researcher, currently in northern Iraq, are available for interviews.

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