

# URGENT ACTION

## POLICE ARRESTS TEACHER AND PROTEST ORGANIZER

On 16 May 2020, armed members of the Asayish and local police entered the home of teacher and activist **Badal Abdulbaqi Aba Bakr** in Duhok, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and arrested him without a warrant. He is being charged with “the misuse of electronic devices” for his role in organizing peaceful protests through social media platforms and remains detained. His family are unable to visit him due to COVID-19 measures and they have not been able to contact him directly. Badal has only seen his lawyer.

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

**Dr. Dindar Zebari**

*Head of the Committee to Evaluate and Respond to International Reports*

*Erbil, Republic of Iraq*

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*Dear Dr. Zebari,*

*On May 16 2020, at approximately 1:15am, armed members of the local police in Duhok as well as Asayish officers took 55-year-old teacher **Badal Abdulbaqi Aba Bakr Barwari** from his home in Duhok, Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) without presenting an arrest warrant, informing him of the reason for his arrest or where he was being taken to. His family had witnessed his arrest from his home and said that “countless” armed security officers had arrived in two vehicles - one belonging to the local police and the other, a civilian four-wheel-drive.*

*On 18 May 2020, Badal's family attempted to visit him in the Zirka detention facility, in Duhok, but were turned away due to measures put in place to counter the spread of COVID-19. They had not seen or heard from him since he was taken from his home.*

*On 18 May 2020, a court in Duhok ordered his release on bail pending a court hearing being set after being formally charged with protesting without permission under the KRI Protest Law No. 17 of 2010. However, Badal was not released and according to his lawyer and family, he was subsequently charged in a new case with inciting a riot under Article 2 of KR-I Law No. 6 of 2008 for the “the misuse of electronic devices” and he was kept in detention. In fact, Badal had only called for a peaceful gathering by teachers to call for their wages being paid on time and receive delayed salaries, according to a video seen by Amnesty International.*

***We urge you to secure the immediate and unconditional release of Badal Abdulbaqi Aba Bakr Barwari and drop all charges related to the exercise of this rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.***

*Yours sincerely,*

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Badal Abdulbaqi Aba Bakr Barwari has been working as a teacher in Duhok for over 27 years and is an activist defending teachers' rights, most recently in relation to the delayed payment of wages of teachers in the KRI.

On 16 May 2020, teachers and civil servants attempted to gather in Azadi Park in Duhok to protest the delayed payment of salaries by the KRG authorities. Protesters told Amnesty International that security forces as well as armed men in civilian clothing blocked the protesters from reaching the park and immediately began to push and drag some of them away. At least 167 protesters, among them teachers, civil servants, and media workers were arrested. Most were released on the same day, but Badal and at least 12 others remained in detention. Of those 12, five remain detained after local authorities brought forward charges under the Article 2 of KRI Law No. 6 of 2008 for the "the misuse of electronic devices" for their role in organizing the protest.

On 12 May, these protest organizers, among them Badal Abdulbaqi Aba Bakr Barwari, had applied to the local authorities in Duhok for a permit to protest as per the Protest Law No. 17 of 2010 of the KR-I. However, this request had gone unanswered. The law stipulates however that prior notice of 48 hours grants permission automatically even if unanswered.

Amnesty International has in the past documented the violent dispersal and mass and pre-emptive arrest of protesters in the KR-I and specifically in the governorate of [Duhok](#). In January 2019, Asayish members carried out a wave of arrests in the governorate of Duhok, of tens of protesters, activists, journalists, and individuals who may have been bystanders during a protest. Asayish members also arrested a journalist and two online activists in the area of Baadre, Duhok governorate, who according to their relatives, were on their way to Duhok to join a peaceful gathering.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Kurdish, Arabic and English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 7 July 2020.

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

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Badal Barwari (him/his)