

Ensuring Integrity: Protecting Independent Civil Society in the Kurdistan Region

29 Aug 2025

To:

Embassies and Consulates

International Development Agencies

International Non-Governmental Organizations

The Middle East, Iraq, and the Kurdistan Region in particular, have experienced profound political, economic, and social transformations since the late 20th century. Efforts to establish democratic institutions and protect human rights have faced persistent

obstacles. Decades of war, ethnic cleansing, and internal conflict culminated in the Iraq Liberation Process—a period of opportunity shadowed by long-standing challenges,

including extremism and terrorism.

This historical context underscores the continued need to invest in human development

and strengthen democratic processes. Progress requires sustained commitment from both domestic and international partners to ensure democracy and coexistence endure.

International actors, including humanitarian organizations and allied governments, have contributed significantly to building civil society. Financial and technical support to local and international NGOs has produced a measurable impact across many sectors. However, a concerning trend in the Kurdistan Region demands attention.

Ruling families in the Kurdistan Region have historically dominated sensitive sectors. Today, this influence is extending into the civil society sphere. Over recent years, a notable number of NGOs have emerged with direct or indirect ties to political parties. Among more than 6,000 registered NGOs, a small subset has gained access to public funds and property through opaque processes lacking transparency and accountability. These

Organizations advance political interests rather than the genuine needs of civil society.

We are concerned that international funding and support have, in some cases, reinforced this system. The consequences are serious:

- **Weakening Independent Organizations:** Resources directed toward politically affiliated NGOs marginalize longstanding, independent organizations, limiting their ability to operate effectively.
- **Reinforcing Undemocratic Structures:** International support strengthens partisan networks, fuels corruption, and undermines democratic institutions. Unequal treatment misuses aid and entrenches existing power structures.
- **Discouraging Youth and Driving Migration:** Young people and activists witnessing the unequal distribution of opportunities may lose faith in reform, a concern highlighted by former UN representatives in Iraq.

We share your commitment to a vibrant, independent civil society. To achieve this, we urge you to:

- **Review and strengthen due diligence procedures for partner organizations.**
- **Prioritize political and financial independence when selecting partners.**
- **Engage directly with genuine, independent civil society organizations without discrimination.**

The Federation of Civil Society Organizations and its partners will actively monitor partner organizations and their affiliations and will report publicly on these findings.

We look forward to your prompt and concrete action on this critical issue.

Respectfully,

Names of networks and organizations:

- 1- The Federation of Organizations consists of (10) organizations and (10) activists
- 2- Halabja Organizations Network consists of (24) organizations
- 3- Halabja Organizations Solidarity Platform consists of (8) organizations
- 4- Sardam Education Platform consists of four organizations
5. Guard Organization for Public Policy Research
6. Open Foundation for Sustainable Development
- 7- Voice Radio
8. Insurance Organization for Economic and Social Rights
- 9- Pay Foundation for Education and Development

***Members of the Federation of Civil Society Organizations:**

1. Center for Democracy and Human Rights Development (DHRD)
2. Aran Organization
3. Supply Organization
4. Liberation Organization
5. Women's Legal Aid Organization (WOLA)
6. Position Organization

7. Women's Academy

8. Success House for Skills Development

9. Kurdistan for All Organization

10. Youth Activity Development Center

Member activists of the federation:

11. Shorsh Amin

12. Awat Mohammed

13. Bakhtiar Abdullah

14. Salar Fatah

15. Alia Faraj

16. Kner Abdullah

17. Qaiser Rahman

18. Faraidoon Hassan

19. Ashwaq Najib

20. Runak Rafiq

• **Members of the Solidarity Platform of Halabja Organizations:**

1. New Organization for Environmental Protection and Women's Rights

2. Halabja Disabled Organization

3. Halabja Peace Organization for Human and Environmental Protection

4. Dare Organization

5. Women Empowerment Organization

6. Human Center Organization

7. Healthy Environment Organization

8. Environmental Organization

• **Halabja Network of Organizations:**

1. Youth Activity Development Center

2. Green Kurdistan Association

3. Youth Development Center

4. Kakai Shinroi Organization for Human Development

5. Sinai Organization for Research and Development

6. Halabja Provincial Supervisory Board

7. Tawanst Organization for Skills Development

8. Share Organization for Individual Development

9. Heart Organization for Education and Service

10. Kurdistan Students and Youth Relations Organization

11. Pomegranate Organization for Agriculture and Environment

12. Kurdish National Organization for Education and Environment

13. Zhyar Institute for Education and Human Development

14. Kurdistan Students Development Organization

15. Sisters Islamic Relations Organization

16. Kurdistan Islamic Sisters Union

17. Halabja Mountaineering Association

18. Kurdistan Kidney Protection Organization

19. University and College Advocacy Board

20. Kurdistan Islamic Sisters Organization

21. Kurdistan Nature Organization

22. Kurdish Livelihood Organization

23. Women's Law Cooperation Organization

24. Zhiway Organization

• **Modern Education Platform:**

1. Sardam Education Organization

2. Education Development Organization

3. New Education Organization

4. Contemporary Education Organization