KRG Coordinator Office for International Advocacy (OCIA)

Dr. Dindar Zebari

Erbil

**IRAK**

Sherwan Sherwani, Guhdar Zebari, Hariwan Issa, Ayaz Karan, Shvan Saeed

Dear Dr. Zibari

I want to express my dismay regarding the accusation of the journalists **Sherwan Sherwani, Guhdar Zebari, Hariwan Issa, Ayaz Karan and Shvan Saeed**. On 16 February, the 2nd Criminal Court of Erbil, in the Kurdish Region of Iraq, convicted all five men to six years in prison. This was based on an unfair trial and constructed arguments alleging their destabilizing the security and stability of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

On 28 April 2021, the Court of Appeal confirmed the prison sentence of the five journalists and activists. In its ruling, the court rejected the journalists‘ allegations of torture and maltreatment and confirmed the prosecution brought against them.

I am calling on the Kurdistan Regional Government to immediately and unconditionally release Sherwan Sherwani, Guhdar Zebari, Hariwan Issa, Ayaz Karam and Shvan Saeed. Please take all steps to ensure their unjust convictions are overturned and ensure a prompt and effective investigation.

I urge you to initiate an inquiry into torture and other ill-treatment. Pending their release, please ensure they have access to qualified health professionals with compliance to medical ethics. Please give them regular and free access to their lawyers and family.

Yours sincerely