

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Iraq: Kurdistan authorities must investigate abduction and murder of journalist**

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) must take immediate steps to investigate the abduction and murder earlier this week of Sardasht Osman, aged 23, a university student who worked as a journalist for the *Ashtiname* newspaper in Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. His abduction and murder follows a spate of other attacks on journalists and other critics of the KRG's two main political parties in recent years for which no-one has yet been brought to justice.

Sardasht Osman, a final year student at the University of Salaheddin in Erbil, was abducted from outside the university on 4 May 2010 by a group of unidentified armed men. They forced him into a car and drove away. He was not seen alive again. His body was found in Mosul on the morning of 6 May 2010. He had been murdered.

Prior to his death, Sardasht Osman wrote articles for *Ashtiname* newspaper, which is published in Erbil and other publications. According to Kurdish media websites, he had recently published an article in *Ashtiname* which criticized a senior Kurdish political figure following which, according to his brother, Bashdar, he received anonymous threats to his mobile phone.

It appears that the abduction and murder of Sardasht Osman may be the latest in a series of attacks that have been carried out against independent journalists and other critics of the KRG authorities in recent years. There has been an emerging pattern of attacks on those who have criticized leading members and officials of the two main political parties in the Kurdistan Region - the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), headed by Mas'oud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), headed by Jalal Talabani - which jointly form the KRG. The attacks, mostly physical assaults but including some killings, have generally been carried out by unidentified men in plain clothes who are widely suspected of being agents of or connected to the Parastin and Zanyari, the party security and intelligence organs of, respectively, the KDP and the PUK.

Amnesty International is calling on the KRG authorities to institute immediately a thorough, independent investigation into the abduction and murder of Sardasht Osman and other attacks on journalists and others in the Kurdistan Region and areas under the effective control of the KRG, and for those responsible to be brought to justice in full conformity with international law.

Public Document

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