

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 14/020/2008  
29 July 2008

UA 209/08      Death threats/fear of extrajudicial executions

IRAQ            Souran 'Omar (m), aged 30            ]  
                  Nehad Jami (m)                         ] journalists  
                  Kusrat 'Abd al-Rahman (m)         ]

13 other journalists and writers

Killed:            Souran Mama Hama (m), aged 23  
                      'Abd al-Sattar Taher Sharif (m), aged 74

---

Several journalists and writers from the Kurdistan region of Iraq have received death threats in recent days. One of those threatened, Souran 'Omar, was named on a list of journalists at risk of being killed, apparently for their criticism of political parties in the region. Two others named on the list have been killed. Amnesty International fears for the lives of the three men named above and the 13 others who appeared on the list.

On 24 July, Souran 'Omar, from Sulaimaniya and married with two children, received anonymous telephone calls threatening him with death if he did not stop writing. He had published a number of articles in a magazine called *Rega*, which he edits, as well as in *Levin*, an independent magazine. These articles were said to be critical of corruption and nepotism in the two main political parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which together hold power in the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq.

On 23 July, men wearing civilian clothes went to the house of Nehad Jami, a journalist based in the city of Kirkuk, which is under the effective control of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The men knocked at the door of Nehad Jami's house, but he and his wife were not there. The men waited for him for several hours and then left. At around the same time, another journalist, Kusrat 'Abd al-Rahman, received threats by phone related to articles he had written.

On 21 July Souran Mama Hama, a 23-year-old journalist, was shot dead outside his parents' house in Kirkuk, from a car, by men wearing civilian clothes. He too had published articles critical of the two political parties. On 6 March an academic, 'Abd al-Sattar Taher Sharif, aged 74, was gunned down in Kirkuk, apparently for his criticism of the Kurdish leaders.

Around mid-July, a list of 16 journalists and writers, including Souran 'Omar, Souran Mama Hama and 'Abd al-Sattar Taher Sharif, was circulated within the Kurdistan region of Iraq and which threatened those named with death. All the journalists and writers mentioned on the list are known to have been critical of the PUK and the KDP. Those named include journalists and writers resident in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, as well as several who are now resident abroad but who also fear that they may be attacked.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Journalists and others in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq who criticise the KRG authorities are at particular risk. In a number of cases, such journalists and others have been arbitrarily arrested and detained without trial, and sometimes tortured. Some have been abducted in the street by armed men wearing civilian clothes, beaten up and then released a few hours or days later.

For example, journalist Mohammad Siyassi Ashkani was arrested in January 2007 and held without charge or trial for almost six months. He spent the first 55 days in solitary confinement. He was then allowed weekly family visits, but was never permitted access to a lawyer. In another case, journalist Rezgar Raza Chouchani was arrested on 3 June 2008 and held incommunicado. He was released a few days later.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic, Kurdish, English or your own language:**

- expressing grave concern at reports that a “death list” is circulating which names journalists and writers who are at risk of extrajudicial execution;
- calling on the KRG authorities to take immediate action to identify those responsible for preparing and circulating this list, and to bring them to justice;
- urging the KRG authorities to take all possible steps to ensure the safety of those named in the list and to uphold the right to freedom of expression, including the right legitimately to express criticism of the KRG authorities;
- calling for the KRG authorities to disclose promptly details of the investigation into the murder of journalist Souran Mama Hama and academic ‘Abd al-Sattar Taher Sharif.

**APPEALS TO:**

**IMPORTANT: please send appeals to these ministers via the KRG offices overseas (list sent separately). You can also target them directly where contact information is provided.**

Prime Minister

Nechirvan Idris Barzani

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister for the Interior

Osman Hajy Mohamood

**Email: interior\_minister\_sul@yahoo.com**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister of Justice

Farooq Jamil Sadiq

**Email: dad@mojkurdistan.com**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister for Peshmerga Affairs

Omar Osman Ibrahim

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister of Human Rights

Dr Yousif M. Aziz

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 September 2008.