

1 April 2020

### **Iraq: Arbitrary detention of human rights defender Hemin Mamand**

On 24 March 2020, human rights defender **Hemin Mamand** was arrested by the police of the Kurdistan Regional Government at his house in Erbil. He remains in detention without charges.

[Hemin Mamand](#) is a Kurdish journalist and human rights defender. He has previously worked with Azhan newspaper and Mewda press, focusing on the issue of corruption in the Kurdish government, and promoting freedom of expression in Kurdistan.

On 24 March 2020, at around 9:00 pm, four cars belonging to the Kurdistan Regional Government police surrounded the house of Hemin Mamand. The police violently arrested him without presenting a warrant. During the arrest, the officers also physically abused his mother and brother. Hemin Mamand was taken to Eskin Police Station, where he was interrogated for several hours without the presence of his lawyer. He was later transferred to Erbil Central Prison where he is currently detained without charges.

The arrest of the human rights defender is linked to a complaint submitted by the Governor of Erbil to the Public Prosecution, regarding a social media post where Hemin Mamand criticised the economic measures taken by the Kurdish government in response to the COVID-19 outbreak as violating the economic rights of the Kurdish people. The investigative judge ordered his detention until 2 April 2020. His request for release on bail was rejected and his detention may be extended.

Hemin Mamand has been arbitrarily detained on multiple occasions in the past, in connection with his participation in peaceful anti-corruption protests. He has also received several death threats aimed at silencing his human rights work, and his family has been frequently harassed by the authorities.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Kurdistan Region to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Hemin Mamand, as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Hemin Mamand while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the *'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment'*, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Carry out immediate, thorough and impartial investigations into the excessive use of force during the arrest of Hemin Mamand, the physical abuse and harassment of his family members, as well as the death threats made against him in the past, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
4. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in the Iraqi Kurdistan and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.