

19 August 2020

Iraq: Assassination attempt against woman human rights defender Lodya Remon Albarty

On 17 August 2020, woman human rights defender **Lodya Remon Albarty** was the victim of an assassination attempt outside her home in Basrah. She was shot at by several unknown men in a car and sustained injuries to her leg.

[Lodya Remon Albarty](#) is an Iraqi woman human rights defender, working with the Al-Firdaws association to promote the rights of women and youth in Iraq. The defender was actively involved in the peaceful demonstrations that began in Iraq in October 2019 protesting corruption in the national government. She is also a member of the Iraqi Social Forum, where she works on environmental issues in Basrah city, as well as water pollution in Euphrates and the Arabia Gulf.

On 17 August 2020, Lodya Remon Albarty was leaving her house in Basrah, when several unknown men in a car wearing face masks began shooting at her, and shooting at her two colleagues who were waiting for her in a car outside her home. The defender managed to escape in her colleagues car sustaining an injury to her leg. Lodya Remon Albarty's injury was not serious, however one of her colleagues sustained an injury to his back, for which he had to be hospitalised. The defender informed the police about the assassination attempt, and an investigation into the incident was opened, however the police have yet to implement any protection measures to protect Lodya Remon Albarty from further attacks.

Since the assassination attempt, Lodya Remon Albarty has been subjected to a defamation campaign on social media. The online defamation campaign is centered around accusations she has been in a relationship with one of her colleagues, who was in the car during the assassination attempt. The threats and slanderous comments online have included comments suggesting that her family are responsible for the assassination attempt in an 'honor crime'.

Lodya Remon Albarty has frequently been harassed regarding her peaceful and legitimate human rights work. In 2018, she was the victim of a defamation campaign, in which she was accused of being a prostitute, and was forced to relocate for a few months for fear of the threats against her and risks she faced as a result of this campaign. In January 2020, she received several death threats following photos of her with the American ambassador being published, and was forced to relocate again for a few months.

Sexualised defamation campaigns, and the implicit threats and risks of such campaigns, are somewhat unique to women human right defenders, and tend to be used to discredit them and their legitimate human rights work. Such campaigns occur regularly in Iraq and are, in some cases, worryingly effective in threatening and harassing women human rights defenders against continuing to defend human rights. Unfortunately in many cases, such as Lodya Remon Albarty's case, these campaigns also place the lives of women human rights defenders at risk.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned regarding the assassination attempt and continuous harassment of woman human rights defender Lodya Remon Albarty. Front Line Defenders believes that Lodya Remon Albarty is being targeted solely as a result of her peaceful and legitimate human rights work in Iraq.

Front Line Defenders urges the Iraqi authorities to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination attempt of woman human rights defender Loyda Remon Albarty, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in **Iraq** are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions [including judicial harassment].