

# URGENT ACTION

## WOMAN DETAINED AFTER SURVIVING IS CAPTIVITY

**A woman who survived IS abduction and captivity has been arbitrarily detained for almost two years in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. She must be released immediately.**

**Bassema Darwish Khidr Murad**, a 34-year-old Yezidi woman who survived abduction by the armed group calling itself the Islamic State (IS), is being arbitrarily detained with her infant daughter at the Women and Juvenile Prison in Erbil, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). She was arrested on 25 October 2014 in Zummar, in the north-west of the country, and has been held without trial since. She was pregnant at the time of her abduction by IS and subsequently gave birth to her daughter while in custody. Amnesty International researchers attempted to visit her in August 2016 and were denied access by the KR-I's Anti-Terrorism Directorate, where she was held at the time.

According to her family, Bassema Darwish was abducted by IS fighters, along with her husband and 33 other relatives, on 3 August 2014 while they tried to flee the city of Sinjar as IS fighters advanced and eventually took over the city. She was moved to Tal 'Afar, in the governorate of Ninewa, where she was separated from her husband along with the rest of the women and children. The fate of her male relatives is unknown.

Bassema Darwish has been accused of complicity with IS forces who killed three members of the Peshmerga (KR-I's armed forces) on 25 October 2014, when they arrived at the house where she was being held captive in Zummar. According to the Anti-Terrorism Directorate, Bassema Darwish had become "radicalized" and had deliberately tricked the Peshmerga forces, and was responsible for their deaths. In a meeting on 15 August, the same authorities told Amnesty International that court hearings in her case had yet to be scheduled. Lawyers attempting to visit her in custody have been denied access. Her relatives told Amnesty International she appeared in court in August at least once without a lawyer and was forced to sign four papers written in Kurdish without understanding their content.

### **Please write immediately in Kurdish, English, or your own language:**

- Calling on the authorities to release Bassema Darwish immediately;
- Urging them to drop the case against her unless she is charged with a recognizably criminal offence, tried in a civilian court in proceedings meeting fair trial standards and kept at liberty until a civilian court rules on the merits of any accusation against her;
- Urging them to allow her immediate access to a lawyer of her own choosing as well as independent monitors;
- Calling on them to ensure that she is provided with all necessary medical and psychosocial assistance, as well as counselling, to help her overcome her ordeal in captivity.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 OCTOBER 2016 TO:**

#### President

Masoud Barzani

**(Please send appeals to the KRG representative in your country addressing the President)**

Kurdistan Region Presidency

Diwan P.O. BOX 60

Erbil, Iraq

Twitter: @masoud\_barzani

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### Chancellor

Masrouf Barzani

Kurdistan Region Security Council

Erbil, Iraq

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Care of Dr Dindar Zebari

Head of the High Committee to Evaluate

and Respond to International Reports

Email: [piris.alzibari@gmail.com](mailto:piris.alzibari@gmail.com)

#### **And copies to:**

#### Judge

Bengeen Qasim Mohamed Kattany

Kurdistan Region Judicial Council

Erbil, Iraq

**Salutation: Dear Sir**

Care of Dr Dindar Zebari

Head of the High Committee to Evaluate

and Respond to International Reports

Email: [piris.alzibari@gmail.com](mailto:piris.alzibari@gmail.com)

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** Mr Karwan Jamal Taher High Representative to KRG UK Representation, Lower Ground Floor, 23 Buckingham Gate, London, SW1E 6LB Telephone: 0203 301 8340, Fax: 0207 828 0257, Email [info@uk.krg.org](mailto:info@uk.krg.org), Twitter: @KRG\_UK

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bassema Darwish Khidr Murad, a 34-year-old Yezidi mother of three, originally from the Babira village in Ninewa Governorate, was abducted by fighters from the armed group calling itself the Islamic State (IS), together with her husband and 33 other relatives, on 3 August 2014 as they tried to flee the city of Sinjar. She was pregnant at the time and was soon after separated from her husband. IS fighters have committed systematic crimes under international law including war crimes and crimes against humanity. Yezidi women and girls have been held in sexual slavery, raped, murdered or tortured. Some were forced to witness the murder of their male relatives, forcibly separated from their children or forced to convert to Islam.

According to informed sources, Bassema Darwish was arrested in the aftermath of military operations by the Peshmerga armed forces to retake the town of Zummar from IS. She was eventually transferred to a detention facility under the authority of the Anti-Terrorism Directorate in Erbil, where she gave birth to her daughter Nour Hussein Haydar Khalifkou. The authorities claim that IS fighters hidden inside the house from which she was arrested killed three members of the Peshmerga, including an officer, once they entered and that Bassema Darwish is responsible for their deaths and is therefore accused under Law 3 of 2006 (Anti-Terrorism Law). Given that lawyers have been unable to access Bassema Darwish and that she was unable to read the papers she signed in court, it is unclear whether she has been officially charged yet or not.

Amnesty International has raised Bassema Darwish's case with the authorities on multiple occasions to no avail, most recently in a letter to Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq, on 26 August.