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Prime Minister Masrour Barzani  
Kurdish Regional Government  
Council of Ministers  
44001 Erbil  
Kurdistan Region  
Iraq

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### **Situation of Kurdish journalist Sherwan Sherwani**

Dear Prime Minister Masrour Barzani,

I am writing to you as Member of the European Parliament and also in my function as member of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with the Republic of Iraq.

I have received very concerning news about the Kurdish journalist Sherwan Sherwani who was arrested by police forces on Oct 7, 2020. He was abducted from his home at gunpoint to put him into solitary confinement. Both Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) have reported about the circumstances of his detention. Until now, Mr Sherwani remains imprisoned and has been forced to make a comprehensive confession under torture. His lawyer Muhamad Abdulla spoke about a deteriorating psychological state after such a long solitary confinement confirming Mr Sherwani has been tortured.

According to a statement by Dindar Zebari, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Coordinator for International Advocacy, Mr Sherwani has admitted to receiving foreign funds to cause disturbance and complain about those with social positions in the region. Both Mr Sherwani's wife and his journalist friend, Niyaz Abdulla, reject these claims as false and suggest he may have confessed to these under torture.

I am very concerned about his health and wellbeing but also about press freedom and freedom of speech in the wider Kurdistan region. Mr Sherwani is very vocal about human rights and fraud. This most recent detention seems to be in line with regional attempts to silence critical independent voices in the area, as he is not the only journalist to face charges and detention for working as journalists.

I strongly condemn means of torture and the imprisonment of journalists. I demand his release with immediate effect unless the Kurdish authorities disclose any charges pressed against him. If these charges remain, he must be given the chance for a fair trial. I also demand that the Kurdish authorities respect the right to freedom of speech and press freedom. Lastly, I also call for the Kurdish regional government to similarly assess all other cases of arrested journalists.

Sincerely,



MEP Erik Marquardt