

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

DELSOZ KHALAF

دلسوز خلف

At liberty **Iraq**

Delsoz Khalaf leads a human rights organisation in Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In 2023 she was charged in two criminal complaints filed by the Workers' Union in Sulaymaniyah, after her own defamation complaint against its head was closed and after she questioned conflicting labour statistics.

HuMENA.

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Case reference HM-IQ-2026-002

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Delsoz Khalaf leads a human rights organisation in Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In 2023 she was charged in two criminal complaints filed by the Workers' Union in Sulaymaniyah, after her own defamation complaint against its head was closed and after she questioned conflicting labour statistics.

STATUS	**At liberty**
COUNTRY	**Iraq**
CHARGES	**Defamation under Article 433 of Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969** **Internet misuse under Article 2 of the Law to Prevent the Misuse of Telecommunications Equipment in the Kurdistan Region No. 6 of 2008**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Drop any charges that remain on record against Delsoz Khalaf in connection with peaceful human rights work.

02 Confirm publicly that Delsoz Khalaf faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case.

03 Guarantee that Delsoz Khalaf can resume that work without surveillance, summons, or further reprisal.

04 Provide effective remedy for the period of deprivation of liberty already served.

Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/delsoz-khalaf/

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Judicial harassment	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12

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HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

2022

SMEAR AND DEFAMATION

Union official sends defamatory letter

The head of the Workers' Union in Sulaymaniyah sent an official letter to the Independent Human Rights Commission alleging that the Dabin Organisation trades in workers' issues without following human rights principles. Khalaf filed a defamation complaint in response.

2023

COMPLAINT FILED

Initial defamation case closed

Khalaf's defamation complaint against the union head was closed due to insufficient evidence. Shortly afterward, the union head filed two criminal complaints against her.

31 July 2023

INTERROGATION

Questioned at police station; released on bail

Khalaf was questioned at the Azmar police station in Sulaymaniyah after an arrest warrant was issued. She was informed of two criminal complaints and released on bail of IQD 2,000,000. Her request for copies of case files and evidence was denied.

17 August 2023

REFERRAL TO TRIAL

Cases referred to Misdemeanour Court

An investigating judge referred both criminal complaints to the Sulaymaniyah Misdemeanour Court. Khalaf plans to contest the referral. She faces up to five years in prison on each charge.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Delsoz Khalaf is the director of the Dabin Organisation for Democratic Development and Human Rights, a human rights organisation based in Sulaymaniyah Governorate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The organisation focuses on labour rights advocacy, women's rights, and anti-corruption work. Its methods include monitoring rights violations in the workplace, raising awareness among workers about their legal entitlements, and publicly challenging misinformation disseminated by labour institutions and government bodies.

Khalaf's work has brought her into direct conflict with the Workers' Union in Sulaymaniyah, a body that represents organised labour in the governorate but has itself been the subject of scrutiny over conflicting public data and allegations of misrepresentation. Her organisation has repeatedly questioned discrepancies between official union publications and statements made by union leadership in media appearances.

The Initial Dispute and Retaliation

In late 2022, the head of the Workers' Union in Sulaymaniyah sent an official letter to the Independent Human Rights Commission in the Kurdistan Region, Sulaymaniyah office. The letter claimed that the Dabin Organisation "trades in issues related to workers" and does not operate according to human rights principles. The letter provided no supporting evidence for these allegations.

Khalaf responded by filing a defamation complaint against the union head. The case was closed due to insufficient evidence. Shortly after that closure, the Workers' Union in Sulaymaniyah filed two separate criminal complaints against Khalaf.

The Charges

The first complaint accuses Khalaf of defamation under Article 433 of Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969. It stems directly from her earlier defamation case against the union official. The second complaint is based on Facebook posts she published in which she raised questions about conflicting labour statistics. In the posts, she compared figures published by the Workers' Union with different figures cited by the union head in televised interviews. She asked why the data did not align.

The union head alleges that these posts constitute insult and belittlement. Khalaf is charged under Article 2 of the Law to Prevent the Misuse of Telecommunications Equipment in the Kurdistan Region, No. 6 of 2008, a vaguely worded statute frequently used to prosecute journalists, activists, and human rights defenders for online expression.

Arrest Warrant and Court Proceedings

On 31 July 2023, Khalaf was questioned at the Azmar police station in Sulaymaniyah after an arrest warrant was issued against her. A police officer recorded her written statement and informed her of the two criminal complaints. The investigating judge released her on bail of IQD 2,000,000, approximately EUR 1,400, the same day. She requested copies of the case files and evidence but was refused.

On 17 August 2023, the investigating judge referred both criminal complaints to the Sulaymaniyah Misdemeanour Court. Khalaf planned to contest the referral. She faced up to five years in prison on each charge, in addition to fines. No court outcome has been reported since August 2023.

Legal Context and Patterns of Repression

The laws invoked against Khalaf, Article 433 of the Iraqi Penal Code and Article 2 of the Kurdistan Region's telecommunications misuse law, are routinely deployed to silence critics, journalists, and human rights defenders. The telecommunications statute in particular has been criticised for its sweeping and imprecise language, which allows for criminalisation of legitimate expression under the guise of preventing "misuse."

The charges against Khalaf follow a common pattern: a public official or institution is criticised; the critic is accused of defamation or online insult; and criminal proceedings are initiated not to secure justice but to silence further scrutiny. The denial of access to case files and evidence at the investigative stage compounds the due-process violations inherent in such proceedings.

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SAMPLE LETTER

Copy it, adapt it and send it from your own address.

Your Excellency,

I am writing about the case of Delsoz Khalaf, director of the Dabin Organisation for Democratic Development and Human Rights; labour-rights, women's-rights, and anti-corruption advocate in Iraq, who has been released. I am writing to ask that the case be closed properly and that no further reprisal follows.

In brief: Delsoz Khalaf leads a human rights organisation in Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In 2023 she was charged in two criminal complaints filed by the Workers' Union in Sulaymaniyah, after her own defamation complaint against its head was closed and after she questioned conflicting labour statistics.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Drop any charges that remain on record against Delsoz Khalaf in connection with peaceful human rights work;
2. Confirm publicly that Delsoz Khalaf faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case;
3. Guarantee that Delsoz Khalaf can resume that work without surveillance, summons, or further reprisal;
4. Provide effective remedy for the period of deprivation of liberty already served.

I will continue to follow this case until the record against Delsoz Khalaf is cleared and no reprisal remains.

Respectfully,

[Your name]
[Your city, country]
8 November 2026