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Iraq: Killing of Woman Human Rights Defender and Feminist Yanar Mohammed

On 2 March 2026, woman human rights defender and feminist **Yanar Mohammed** was killed in an armed attack in front of her residence in northern Baghdad.

[Yanar Mohammed](#) was a prominent Iraqi woman human rights defender and feminist, and the co-founder and director of the [Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq \(OWFI\)](#). Since 2003, she had worked to protect women facing gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, trafficking, and so-called 'honour killings.' Under her leadership, OWFI established a network of safe houses across several Iraqi cities, providing protection and support to hundreds of women. Yanar Mohammed led these efforts despite all the ongoing impediments and risks. She was a strong advocate for secularism and women's equality. Throughout her activism, Yanar Mohammed faced death threats and, at times, was forced to restrict her movement.

According to an [official statement from OWFI](#), on 2 March 2026 at 9:00, two unidentified gunmen on motorcycles opened fire on Yanar Mohammed as she stood outside her home. She was quickly transported to the hospital, however, despite the effort of medical personnel, she succumbed to her injuries.

Reportedly, Yanar Mohammed had returned to Baghdad from Canada just a few days prior to her assassination, raising concerns about the potential surveillance and monitoring of her movements.

For many years, particularly since 2004, Yanar Mohammed had been the target of death threats aimed at dissuading her from defending women's rights, yet she remained defiant in the face of threats from ISIS and other armed groups. Tragically, this time the unidentified perpetrators carried out their threats, resulting in profound shock among her friends and allies.

Front Line Defenders condemns this act of violence in the strongest terms and considers it a direct attack on human rights work in Iraq and, specifically, on feminist struggles and the values of freedom and equality.

The organisation expresses deep concern for the safety of other OWFI members, as reports indicate that they have received threats following Yanar Mohammed's assassination.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Iraq to:

1. Publicly condemn the killing of Yanar Mohammed;
2. Initiate an immediate, thorough, and impartial investigation into the killing of Yanar Mohammed, ensuring the publication of the findings and the prosecution of those responsible in accordance with international law;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of OWFI members;
4. Implement measures to prevent further attacks against human rights defenders in Iraq, and to enable human rights defenders to continue their activities in defence of human rights without fear of reprisals in accordance with Iraq's international human rights obligations.

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