

Ambassador Coly Seck
President, Human Rights Council
United Nations
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10

Via Fax to +41 22 917 0490

10 July 2019

Excellency,

We draw your urgent attention to the threat made yesterday by Iraqi Member of Parliamentarian Ali al-Ghanmi and his Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee, [calling](#) to revoke the citizenship of Ms. Sarah Idan in retaliation for her testimony before the United Nations Human Rights Council, in its current 41st Session. (“Because of Israel, Parliamentary Security Declares Support for Abolition of Nationality From Miss Iraq,” *Baghdad Today*, 9 July 2019.)

Two years ago, as reported worldwide, Ms. Idan and her family [received death threats](#) after she posed for a photo with Miss Israel at the 2017 Miss Universe Pageant and shared it on her Instagram as an expression of peace and love. As a result, Ms. Idan’s family was forced to flee Iraq, and she remains fearful of returning home.

This past month, Ms. Idan testified twice before the 41st session of the Human Rights Council. On 25 June 2019, Ms. Idan [testified](#) in support of Arab-Israeli peace and in opposition to Hamas terrorism; on 26 June, Ms. Idan [testified](#) about human rights abuses by the Iraqi government.

Now, in retaliation for UN testimony, Iraqi MP Ali al-Ghanmi, a member of the Iraqi Parliament and its Security and Defense Committee, has called (in a statement given to and reported by *Baghdad Today*) for Ms. Idan’s Iraqi citizenship to be revoked on account of her defense of Israel, and the article quotes from her 25 June testimony. According to the article, citing MP al-Ghanmi, “the Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee called for the citizenship of Miss Iraq Sarah Idan to be removed for her defense of Israel.” The MP [threatened](#) that “she will be held accountable by law” and called on “the competent authorities to follow up.” The article further reports that “a number of bloggers and activists” in Iraq are calling for the same.

Such threats constitute overt acts of intimidation and reprisal in express violation of General Assembly Resolution [72/247](#) and Human Rights Council Resolution [36/21](#), which condemn “all acts of intimidation and reprisal” by states against “individuals who seek to cooperate with the United Nations, or who have provided testimony,” as is the case with Ms. Idan.

As [affirmed](#) by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “the freedom to engage with the UN is a basic exercise of fundamental freedoms and human rights of all, and must be respected and protected.” Reprisals against Ms. Idan for her UN testimony further amount to a violation of her right to free speech, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, to which Iraq is a State Party.

As President of the Human Rights Council, we urge you to act under Resolution 36/21 and unequivocally condemn all acts or threats of reprisal and intimidation against Ms. Idan, and specifically to:

(a) Demand that Iraq, an elected member of the Human Rights Council, fulfil its duty under Art. 4 to take all appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of acts of intimidation or reprisal against Ms. Idan, and to effectively protect those who have cooperated with the United Nations in the field of human rights from any act of intimidation;


(b) Demand that Iraq fulfil its duty, under Art. 5, to ensure accountability for any act of intimidation or reprisal against Ms. Idan, by ensuring impartial, prompt and thorough investigations in order to bring MP al-Ghanmi and any other perpetrators to justice, and provide access to effective remedies for Ms. Idan;

(c) Demand that Iraq fulfil its duty, under Art. 7, to provide information, as appropriate, to the Human Rights Council on all measures taken by them to prevent and address acts of intimidation or reprisal against Ms. Idan;

(d) Issue a statement from the Council floor rebuking Iraq for this prohibited intimidation and reprisal, and reminding all countries of their obligation to protect those who testify before the Council.

Finally, we urge the UNHRC Bureau to report these incidents to the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner, and all other relevant UN mechanisms dealing with reprisals against those who cooperate with UN human rights bodies. Thank you for your attention to this grave matter.

Sincerely,



Hillel C. Neuer
Executive Director

cc: Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General
Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Andrew Gilmour, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights