International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation

Kirkuk Center urges Kurdish government to enforce the regional Family Violence Law prohibiting female circumcision.

Erbil (Iraq), 06 February 2014 – On the occasion of the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the Kirkuk Center for Torture Victims calls on the Kurdistan Regional Government to fully recognize its responsibility for implementing the legal framework set up in 2011 prohibiting this human rights violation.

While the Kurdish Law Against Domestic Violence defines a punishment of up to six years imprisonment or a respective fine for encouraging or carrying out this practice, FGM rates remain alarmingly high in some regions, as recent surveys have shown. Local authorities need to establish control mechanism, train police officers and judges, provide former midwives with alternative sources of income and support women's rights NGOs.

“FGM has to be banned not only because of its medical consequences, but also because of its extremely traumatizing effects on the psyche and further development of the affected girls. Being forced to undergo the cutting practice by their own mothers causes severe emotional and psychological disturbances”, explains Salah Ahmad, family therapist and chairman of the Kirkuk Center.

The recent decrease of FGM in some regions of North Iraq are due to the work of NGOs, most notably our partner organization WADI. Their contribution is valuable yet faces restrictions, since their aid workers do not have the right to control the execution of laws. This is where the authorities have to step in.

The Kirkuk Center for Torture Victims, established in 2005, is a human rights organization offering free rehabilitation services to survivors of torture and inhuman treatment in Iraq. A large part of our work is dedicated to the support and treatment of female victims of violence, and to the eradication of domestic and gender-based violence.