UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

**Fighting Impunity: Kirkuk Center urges Government of Iraq to enforce the UN Convention Against Torture.**

**Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 26 June 2014** – On the occasion of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture and despite the current crisis related to the expanding offensive by ISIS insurgents, the Kirkuk Center for Torture Victims calls on the Government of Iraq to fully meet its obligations arising from the ratification of the UN Convention Against Torture in 2011.

This international human rights instrument obliges states to investigate allegations of torture, to prosecute perpetrators and to rehabilitate victims. “To date, none of these obligations have been fulfilled by the Iraqi government”, says Michael Lehmann, vice chairman of the Kirkuk Center. “Torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, including unacceptable conditions of detention, remain widespread in Iraq. While victims are being deprived of their right to know, their right to justice and their right to reparation, past and present perpetrators go unpunished.”

Staff of the Kirkuk Center for Torture Victims see the consequences of this situation every day. “There is a lack of recognition and financial support on part of the state for the psychological traumata, physical impairments and overwhelming fears of torture survivors. Instead, the climate of ignorance and impunity often aggravates the mental condition of torture victims due to the failings to adequately address their needs and to prevent torturers from repeating their crimes”, explains Salah Ahmad, family therapist and chairman of the Kirkuk Center.

NGOs and international organizations alone cannot and should not compensate for the state’s failure to act. This obligation is clearly and undeniably allocated to the state under international law, particularly in the Convention Against Torture. That is why the Kirkuk Center strongly urges the Iraqi authorities to establish effective control mechanisms in detention facilities, to train the police force, health and legal professionals and to educate the public in order to respect and fulfill its self-adopted obligations under international human rights law. Especially in times like these, the Iraqi state must make a stand against violence and terror.

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.