



### **To the press and public,**

This morning at 9 a.m. the premises of the Kurdish Women's Relation Office (REPAK) in Erbil – Iraqi Kurdistan was raided by General Asayish Security Forces. During the raid the ID's and mobile phones of the staff including the chairwoman were seized so that they were not able to inform anybody. While the heavily armed Asayish and Intelligence Forces did not state any reason or showed any documents, the premises of REPAK got closed and the staff expelled from the city. Outside the borders of the city the three activists were released in the middle of the road, got back their mobiles and ID's and were told that from now on they will not be able to enter the city anymore. This all happened in an arbitrary and lawless way.

REPAK was founded in March 2014 as legal NGO in Erbil. Main aim was to strengthen the ties and cooperation between different Kurdish women organisations. At the same time REPAK is cooperating with a high number of women's, civil society and human rights organisations in Kurdistan and at international level to introduce the Kurdish women's situation and struggle. Especially together with the attacks of IS in Southern/Iraqi Kurdistan REPAK became the main address for women's delegations to visit Kurdistan and observe the situation and the struggle of Kurdish women. REPAK has participated dozens of international conferences and panels to share the situation of Yazidi Kurdish women captured by IS and the big resistance of Kurdish women that struggle for freedom. Moreover REPAK is part of a lot of international women's organisations and structures as Middle Eastern coordinator, like the World Women's Conference.

The raid and de-facto closure of a women's organisation like REPAK in a time where the attacks of IS against Southern Kurdistan continue constitutes a serious problem for the local authorities as it puts a great question mark.

Moreover at the time of the 100th anniversary of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which formed the basis for the division of Kurdistan into four parts, and where numberless statements are made about the insignificance of these artificial borders, a political party is trying to establish new borders in the Southern part of Kurdistan by expelling activists and politicians from one territory. In a period where Kurdish national unity is more important than ever before, this politics of KDP are dividing and splitting Southern Kurdistan more and more.

While forming an obstacle to national unity on one side, on the other this raid pictures clearly the attitude towards the Kurdish Women's Liberation Movement. In this meaning REPAK was not chosen randomly as target. Within the last months more and more female activists got arrested by security forces in cities like Erbil, Zakho and Duhok, which are controlled by KDP. Most recently the Yazidi journalist Aysel Avesta got arrested and after a week released after high internal and international pressure. The closure of REPAK and the deportation of its staff

constitute an attack against the women's liberation line at the same time. By doing so the male state of mind, represented by KDP tries to prevent the development of women's liberation consciousness, the democratization of politics and a comprehensive change that would solve the structural problems of Southern Kurdistan.

As REPAK we do not accept the closure of our centre and we will not yield to this patriarchal state of mind that tries to establish new borders. From now on we will continue our activities more strongly and keep on proclaiming the voice of resisting Kurdish women in- and outside Kurdistan. We will represent the Kurdish women's resistance for a free life, which created wondering admiration and is a powerful inspiration for all the women worldwide, in a more effective and strong way.

We ask all women's organisations, activists and human rights organisations to protest against this attack against REPAK. This attack is targeting all of us. Let's raise our voices all together; for women's liberation, against patriarchal state of mind.

**5 May 2016**

**REPAK Executive Board**