

# Kurdish Journalist Sarkawt Shamsulddin has been freed

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Sarkawt Shamsulddin, the NRT TV journalist arrested in Sulaimaniya on Wednesday, was freed Thursday afternoon. He posted on [Twitter](#) that had been held in the head of PUK Asayish's office in the city, and is unharmed.

In the aftermath of his arrest, friends and supporters in Kurdistan and in the United States had alerted the U.S. government and launched a social media campaign calling for his release, as well as the release of other detained journalists and politicians in the KRG.

Shamsulddin said that he was targeted for his involvement with NRT TV, public criticism of PUK, and support for peaceful demonstrations in the region. "NRT TV and other free media remain targeted by PUK and KDP as they see free media as a threat to themselves and their messaging," he told The Region.

After his abduction, Shamsulddin was blindfolded and held in a locked room in the PUK Asayish offices. No one spoke to him until the afternoon of December 21<sup>st</sup>.

When they did, he said, the head of Asayish had a “friendly” conversation with Shamsulddin about the tensions in the region, and even apologized for keeping him in custody. “I knew that they were under huge pressure after they abducted me,” he claims. It is likely that that pressure, both from current events in the region and from the publicity of the case, led to his timely release.

Other voices of dissent have not been so lucky. NRT TV’s offices are still closed and its websites unreachable. Demonstrations against the KRG [continued](#) throughout the day, and protestors still face violence at the hands of the authorities. Security forces [shut down](#) an anti-corruption NGO in Erbil. Shaswar Abdulwahid and Rabun Maroof are still in custody.

The KRG continues to repress criticism, and its supporters point to the chaos as a sign that any protest is illegitimate—rather than as a response to the unsustainable conditions regional politicians had created and the violence inflicted on demonstrators. All cases of repression—whether high-profile or not—must be addressed, and again we must call for a democratic resolution to the conflict and the freedom of critical voices. Shamsulddin believes himself that “the current crisis in the KRG can be resolved with new elections and electing new leadership. Without that,” he warns, “it will remain unstable for a while.”