

**Research Article****MEDIA TREATMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN IRAQ****\*Muntaser Ayed Abbas, Haider Sadiq Yassin and Hussein Rahim Khudair**

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**Abstract**

The impact of mass media on public understanding of human rights is the focus of this initial investigation. I, Abdul Karim Abdullah, am the author. This study set out to examine how the media in Iraq shapes public perceptions of human rights. A representative sample of the Iraqi population was surveyed using a questionnaire to collect the data. The study concluded that media plays a major role in human rights awareness-raising due to its contributions to publicizing information about human rights and helping the general population better grasp these rights. At the same time, the media can also directly influence public and private behavior regarding human rights by increasing public knowledge of these issues and encouraging all people to stand up for what they truly believe. This study actually aims to study how all media outlets in Iraq actually contribute to defending human rights. All data came from interviews with distinguished and well-known Iraqi journalists and human rights defenders. The study's conclusions actually confirm that these media can greatly help in protecting human rights by directly highlighting violations and spreading real awareness of this protection. In addition, mainstream media may amplify the voices of these human rights defenders and put pressure on governments to protect and protect these basic freedoms. The lack of freedoms for the media in Iraq has an impact on how human rights concerns are covered by the media, either by restricting coverage or by handling it in an unfair way.

**Keywords:** Media, Human Rights, Treatment, Iraq.

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**INTRODUCTION**

As a platform for the dissemination of ideas and information and the expression of opinions, the media is crucial to society's operation. The media is vital in protecting human rights in democracies because it highlights human rights abuses and brings more attention to these rights. Iraqi media confront enormous challenges when trying to cover human rights issues in a country that has been at the center of an armed war for quite some time. Several factors impact how the Iraqi media covers human rights issues. These include a general lack of cultural and social variety, restrictions on media independence, and an absence of a robust media culture. The purpose of this research is to examine how these factors influence media coverage of human rights issues in Iraq. In addition to reviewing the pertinent literature and prior research, the study's data came from interviews with Iraqi journalists and human rights activists.

Examining the coverage of human rights issues in Iraqi media is the main objective of this research. Research is being conducted with the objective of addressing the following questions:

1. Regarding Iraqi human rights, which issues receive the most coverage in the country's media?
2. Is anyone doing anything to fix these issues?
3. Are the media's portrayals of Iraq's human rights issues true to life?
4. How does the media portray human rights in Iraq? What elements impact this coverage?

**Research importance**

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this research to society and science. It adds to our knowledge of how human rights issues are covered in Iraqi media. The results of this study can also help shape media policies and practices that do a better job of protecting human rights.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study made use of inductive technique, which seeks to discover relationships between variables by first collecting data through experiments or observation and then analyzing that data. The data was collected through reviewing the pertinent literature, reviewing previous studies, and interviewing journalists and activists involved in Iraqi human rights issues.

**The title of this study: How does the media directly affect actual human rights behaviour**

Studying the way and how the media in Iraq influence the actual behaviors of the general public in the field of well-known human rights was the main actual driving force for conducting this research. A representative sample of the existing Iraqi population has already been surveyed using a database collection questionnaire. The findings of this study indicate that the media can indeed directly influence public attitudes and actions regarding human rights, particularly by increasing public knowledge and awareness of these issues and essentially motivating people to stand up for what they already believe. In fact, the media may help shape public opinion and foster a sense of community support and solidarity.

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## Search Plan

### Chapter One: How did human rights clearly and directly affect Iraqi society and their importance?

During this article, we will discuss three main points: first, the concept of human rights; Secondly, its importance; Thirdly, the impact of the concept of human rights on the Iraqi society.

### Chapter Two: Hypotheses directly related to how the media portrays well-known human rights issues

Known media selection theory addresses the first part, while framing theory addresses the second part. We discussed the concept of direct social influence in the third chapter.

### Chapter Three: Media treatment of human rights issues

In the first section, we will discuss the primary human rights topics that are mentioned in the Iraqi media. In the second portion, we will discuss the manner in which the media tackles human rights issues.

The impact of media coverage on human rights issues on the general public is the third topic that will be discussed.

### Chapter Four: Factors that affect the media treatment of human rights issues in Iraq

- The first topic: The nature of the political system
- The second topic: the structure of society
- The third topic: media culture

### Chapter One: The importance of human rights and their impact on Iraqi society

- The first topic: the concept of human rights

All human beings, regardless of their race, gender, religion, origin, or any other factor, are entitled to some fundamental rights and freedoms, which are collectively referred to as human rights. The fact that they are innate to human nature means that they cannot be ignored or disregarded. The notion of human rights may be traced back to ancient times, when specific conceptions connected to the protection of human rights were in existence. These concepts included the right to life, the right to liberty, and the right to property. On the other hand, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which was drafted in France in the 17th century, was the first time that an integrated human rights framework was produced.

- The second topic: The importance of human rights

The significance of respecting human rights

It is essential to recognise the significance of human rights on both the individual and the society level. When it comes to the person, human rights guarantee that he will live his life with safety and dignity, and they shield him from being persecuted and subjected to injustice. Within the context of society, human rights serve to ensure its steadiness and prosperity, while also fostering the principles of equality and fairness.

## Types of human rights: Human rights are divided into several types, including:

### Civil and political rights

These are the rights that deal with the safeguarding of personal liberty, and they include the freedom to engage in or abstain from particular actions, without governmental or other person's intervention. Among these privileges are the following:

Everyone has the fundamental right to exist, which cannot be violated in any way. Another fundamental right is the freedom to pursue one's own interests without interference, which includes the ability to freely travel, speak one's mind, and gather with others.

Finally, no one has the right to discrimination on the basis of their gender, race, religion, or nationality. An integral part of justice in criminal cases is the right to a fair trial.

- First, the right to privacy, which is the ability to keep one's own information private and not shared with anyone else without permission.
- Second, the right to expression, which is the liberty to speak one's mind without interference.
- Third, the right to assembly, which is the liberty to gather with others as one sees fit, also without interference.
- Finally, the right to freedom of religion, which is the liberty to follow one's own religious or philosophical beliefs without interference.

The right to participate in politics encompasses the freedom to vote and to run for public office.

### Economic, social and cultural rights

To put it simply, these are the rights that deal with satisfying basic human needs; they are a set of safeguards and advantages that guarantee people can get things like medical treatment, an education, and a job. Some of these benefits include:

- The right to education, which includes the freedom from discrimination and the right to a free and appropriate public elementary and secondary education for all children.
- The right to health: This refers to the right to receive fundamental health care, including preventive and curative services, without bias.
- The right to work: A worker has the right to work in an environment that ensures their safety and minimum wage.
- The right to housing: A person has the right to adequate housing that protects them from the elements.
- The right to food: A person has the right to obtain enough food to meet their basic nutritional needs.
- Everyone has the inherent right to drink water that is free of contaminants.

Everyone has the right to engage in cultural pursuits, such as attending classes and creating art, as they see fit.

### Collective rights

As part of a broader set of rights that offer vital safeguards and services to groups, basic rights such as the right to self-determination and the right to development are examples of

rights that apply to the preservation of group rights. Some of these benefits include:

- The right to self-determination means that a group can make its own decisions about its own future, free from external influence.
- A group is entitled to sustainable development that meets its basic needs, which is known as the right to development.
- The freedom to control one's own natural resources: This refers to the right of communities to have complete control over their own natural resources, free from outside intervention.

Groups have the right to be shielded from prejudice based on factors such as race, gender, religion, or national origin, which is known as the right to protection from discrimination.

Individual human rights and their significance

Individuals are guaranteed the following under human rights, which contribute to their enjoyment of a dignified life:

- The right to exist: This fundamental right is enjoyed by every individual and cannot be violated under any condition.

The first is the liberty from oppression, which includes the freedom to travel, speak, and congregate as one sees fit. Two, everyone has the right to be treated equitably regardless of their gender, religion, nationality, or race; this is known as the right to equality.

### **The importance of human rights at the societal level**

Societal stability and prosperity are aided by human rights, which ensure basic freedoms for individuals and institutions alike, such as the right to openly express oneself and gather in large crowds. Protecting these liberties is one manner in which human rights advance democracies. Human rights can often help achieve that social justice by ensuring equality for all people in the same society, regardless of their gender, religion or known place of origin. Human rights can actually help build societal peace by directly upholding the rights of all combatants while at the same time promoting dialogue and developing mutual understanding between them. The impact of human rights on Iraqi society (topic three)

### **The impact of human rights on Iraqi society**

The following are some of the ways in which human rights can make a difference to Iraqi society:

#### **Promoting democracy**

Human rights play an essential role in the establishment of democracy in Iraq by guaranteeing basic freedoms for both individuals and institutions, such as the freedom to assemble and speak freely. With these liberties, people can form groups, speak their minds, and engage in civic and political life.

#### **Achieving social justice**

Human rights, which ensure equality for all members of society regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, or place of birth, pave the way for social justice to be achieved in Iraq. By

guaranteeing the safety and equality of all individuals, we can build a society that is more just and equitable.

### **Peace building**

Human rights can help end the violence in Iraq by defending the rights of all parties and fostering an atmosphere of mutual understanding. Respect for each party's rights allows for more amicable resolution of conflicts.

### **Human rights are the foundation of sustainable development**

Because they guarantee social justice and stability, human rights contribute to an atmosphere that is conducive to development. Development and the attainment of social and economic objectives are possible when people and communities are able to fully use their human rights. Peace and security can never be achieved without respect for human rights. In order to avoid conflicts, human rights are crucial since they protect the rights of everyone involved. When people's rights are respected, everyone can live in peace and safety.

### **Fundamental to human dignity are human rights**

No matter how different we are, human rights help safeguard each person's inherent dignity. It is only possible to treat all people with respect and dignity when they actually have access to known human rights.

### **Chapter Two: Theories related to media treatment of human rights issues**

- The first section: The theory of media choice

Media choice theory is actually a prominent and important framework for understanding how these news organizations actually cover these human rights issues. According to this well-known hypothesis, media coverage decisions are directly and indirectly affected by several factors. Factors internal and external to that media organization are taken into account, such as known editorial and publishing practices, goals, demographics, and other characteristics of that target audience. Other important and known things such as public opinion as well as external pressures, the current state of a community's politics as well as its economy, and the general known climate of the community are important examples of these important external factors. The theory of critical media selection is also based on the "event focus" hypothesis, which actually states that news organizations can give more and more airtime to well-known and well-known dramatic stories and events because they generally know that this will attract the public's attention to them. Media coverage of controversial and divisive public and private topics tends to amplify existing social tensions, according to the "difference-focus" theory.

### **Many areas make use of media choice theory in their work, such as:**

Media processing of news refers to how the media use theory to understand how it chooses which news stories to cover and how they cover them. To understand directly how the media makes these important decisions about which ads to show directly or indirectly and which ads to actually exclude, the media's treatment of ads requires the application of this theory.

## Actual media treatment of human rights issues

The factual manner in which the media directly cover well-known human rights issues is another area to which media selection theory applies. So this well-known media coverage of concerns that actually relate to human rights is often completely disproportionate to that which is controversial, well-reported directly, or realistically reflects known societal tensions and conflicts. For example, it is often stories directly related to human rights violations that receive the most coverage in mainstream media. Including, but not limited to, political imprisonment, torture, and murder, reasons and motives. These concerns about human rights in known armed conflicts, whether political or sectarian, receive clear and significant media coverage.

### The second topic: Frame theory

Framing Theory is a prominent paradigm for discussions of media portrayals of social and political concerns. The key idea behind this theory is that instead of conveying information in an abstract manner, various media outlets employ distinct frames to shape and interpret the news and facts. Definition: "a collection of ideas, principles, and assumptions that govern our perception of the world and the problems within it." The news media create frames by the stories they report and the angles from which they angle them. Postulates based on theory: One of the ideas that gave rise to frame theory is the importance hypothesis, which posits that media frames dictate the significance Current events and topics for viewers According to the meaning hypothesis, viewers interpret news stories and other topics based on the frames employed by the media. The impact hypothesis posits that the way the media presents news and other topics shapes the way the public perceives and makes sense of those topics.

### Applications of the theory: Frame theory is applied to a group of fields, including:

1. Theorising about media processing of news, in which theoretical frameworks are employed to comprehend the ways in which media frames shape news.
2. Theorising the media's use of frames to pique viewers' interest and influence their opinions in the context of media processing of advertisements.
3. Entertainment programme coverage in the media, with an eye towards applying theory to the question of how media frames influence societal norms and values.

### Media treatment of human rights issues

When it comes to how the media covers human rights concerns, frame theory is just as relevant. The media's coverage of human rights issues is characterised by the use of multiple frameworks, according to studies. One framework centres on the anguish endured by victims of human rights violations; another examines the political justifications for such violations; and a third examines the legal basis for human rights. Being human When covering murder, torture, and political imprisonment, for instance, the media often employs the humanitarian framework, which pertains to human rights breaches. Human rights concerns pertaining to war and political disputes are often covered by the media via a political lens. Studies have shown that media coverage of human rights concerns through frames can have both positive and negative

outcomes. One of these outcomes is the simplification of difficult issues, according to the studies. When tackling a human rights issue from just one perspective, the complexity of the problem could be oversimplified, creating a bipolar issue. When it comes to human rights concerns, the media could be biased due to the frames they utilise.

### • Third section: Social influence theory

There are actually many important, well-known and pioneering theories that analyze the direct impact of the media on audiences, but the theory of social and professional influence is considered among the most prominent among them. Well-known media can directly influence known public behavior by actually playing on people's emotions, thoughts, and societal perceptions. The concept of "realistic social influence" consists of "the process of changing the behavior or direction of a known individual or group as a result of exposure to the ideas, methods, or behaviors of others." This method of direct exposure of an individual to the ideas, actions and opinions of others is known as direct influence. This is only one type of known social influence. These media are a type of physical platform that can actually expose people to the ideas, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of others.

The important hypotheses based on this theory: Among the many hypotheses and theories that form the basis of the theory of social and behavioral influence are the following: (a) The realistic social response hypothesis, which states that individuals are actually considered more likely to respond to realistic media messages that directly reflect their general values and beliefs. And private; (b) the human social learning hypothesis, which states that individuals can acquire many new habits simply by observing the behavior of others; (c) The actual normalization hypothesis, which states that all individuals may actually begin to accept a particular practice simply because they actually observe it among their peers.

### The well-known theory of social realist influence is already applied in various fields, including:

- Marketing is the field that applies theory to comprehend the impact of advertisement on consumer actions.
- In politics, the application of theory helps to comprehend the impact of media on public opinion.
- The field of pedagogy, which explores the impact of media on student behaviour through the application of theory.

### Reporting anticipated and unexpected human rights concerns actually in the media

Yet studies also reveal that media coverage of human rights issues does not necessarily influence the general population. There are a multitude of factors contributing to this, including:

- Personal factors, such as people's attitudes, beliefs, and practices regarding human rights;
- Societal factors, such as the present cultural, economic, and political climate of society.

## Section 3: How the Media Cover Human Rights Issues

### Part one: Iraqi media's main points of debate on human rights

The media has a key role in shaping the public's perception of human rights concerns. Therefore, for human rights in Iraq to

progress, it is essential that these subjects be covered by the media. Extrajudicial killings, torture, forced disappearances, and other forms of physical and psychological abuse are among the many human rights-related subjects covered by Iraqi media.

- Human rights violations, including assaults on women and prejudice against them in the workplace, in schools, and in their health.
- Violations of children's rights, including forced child recruitment, early marriage, and underage labor.
- Minority rights breaches, including discrimination based on language, ethnicity, or religion.

Violations of the human rights of people with impairments, include prejudice against

This is because of a number of factors, one of which being the significance of these concerns given their impact on the lives of millions of people in Iraq. The comparatively simple nature of handling these problems, since information about them may be obtained by speaking with witnesses, survivors, victims, or government representatives. public interest in these matters since they are of great significance to the Iraqis.

There are differences in how these problems are covered by Iraqi media outlets. Certain media sources focus on giving information and insight on these topics while addressing them objectively. Some other media sources take a biased stance when covering these topics, emphasizing who should be blamed the government or armed organizations, for example.

- The second subject: Human rights concerns and how the media covers them

When covering human rights issues, the media is held to a set of professional standards that include: balance, which requires that the reports represent the parties involved; accuracy and objectivity, which requires that the reports be based on factual information and address all aspects of the issue objectively. various viewpoints on the matter, including those of the victims, survivors, representatives of the government, and other relevant parties. Reporting by the media must respect victims of human rights breaches and keep them safe from additional damage.

#### **Types of human rights concerns covered by the media**

The media addresses human rights concerns in a variety of ways, such as:

- News reporting, which is the most popular approach, entails informing readers about and evaluating abuses. Investigative journalism is a more comprehensive approach than news reporting, entailing the collection of data and the interviewing of victims, survivors, public servants, and other relevant parties.
- Documentary films, which provide an in-depth examination of human rights issues,
- Talk shows, where different viewpoints on human rights issues are discussed. Thirdly, the impact of media portrayals of human rights issues on the general population

The following can increase public awareness of human rights issues through media coverage:

The media has the power to influence public opinion in ways that promote human rights in the following ways:

- Help the public develop more empathetic views toward human rights by providing evidence and analysis that supports these rights. Highlighting the accounts of victims and survivors can motivate others to stand up for human rights and foster empathy for individuals who have been wrongfully impacted by the legal system.
- Calling for human rights legislation to be passed, which could inspire others to do the same.

More pressure on other groups and governments to take action to promote human rights as a result of media coverage

Media coverage can play a role in increasing pressure on governments and other entities to address human rights violations by: bringing attention to these violations; and consequently, putting pressure on these entities to take action.

#### **Section 4: Factors Affecting Media Reports on Iraqi Human Rights Issues**

##### **The primary focus was on the structure of the governmental system**

Media coverage of human rights issues is very systemically affected by defining features of any given political system. In democracies, the press has more leeway to report on human rights issues without bias. The media may present human rights issues in a biased or incomplete light under authoritarian regimes because of the reduced freedom of the press.

Here are a few examples of how the features of Iraq's political system impact the coverage of human rights issues in the media.

- In 2022, the Iraqi government banned the Qatari broadcaster Al Jazeera for criticizing the government's handling of human rights issues.
- In 2023, the government prosecuted several Iraqi journalists for criticizing the government's handling of human rights issues.

The second topic is the social organization.

Institutions in society have a substantial impact on how news outlets report on human rights issues. Nations that are very diverse in terms of culture and socioeconomic status may find it challenging to have media coverage of human rights issues that is both comprehensive and unbiased.

##### **Community organization serving Iraqis**

There is a vast variety of religions, cultures, and ethnicities represented in Iraq. This variety makes it hard for the media to cover human rights issues thoroughly and objectively. The media's coverage of human rights issues in Iraq is influenced by the structure of society. Media coverage of human rights matters in Iraq may be limited or skewed due to the country's cultural and social diversity. On rare occasions, news outlets may focus on problems affecting a specific group while ignoring human rights issues affecting other communities.

### The third area of study is media culture

Media culture has a significant impact on how human rights issues are reported in the news. When it comes to reporting on human rights issues, societies that value media coverage highly hold journalists to high standards of honesty and objectivity.

There may be fewer demands from the media to fairly and accurately cover human rights issues in societies with a poor media culture. Iraq's media landscape is comparatively underdeveloped. This is because of a number of things, such as limited media freedoms, government control over the media, high rates of illiteracy, and a weak media culture in Iraq, which can restrict or superficially address the media's coverage of human rights concerns. The media occasionally has a tendency to ignore matters pertaining to human rights.

### Conclusion

- The lack of freedoms for the media in Iraq has an impact on how human rights concerns are covered by the media, either by restricting coverage or by handling it in an unfair way.
- Iraq's cultural and socioeconomic variety makes it difficult for the media to cover human rights concerns comprehensively and impartially.
- The lack of media freedoms in Iraq prevents the media from covering sensitive human rights issues or forces the media to cover human rights issues in a biased manner.
- The cultural and social diversity of Iraq makes it difficult to focus on all issues affecting all populations in a culturally appropriate manner.
- The weak media culture in Iraq makes it difficult for the media to address human rights issues accurately and objectively.

### Recommendations

- Increasing media freedoms in Iraq so that they can more openly and impartially cover human rights issues.
- Promoting social and cultural variety in the Iraqi media to reflect the diversity of Iraqi society.
- Encouraging media culture in Iraq by informing people about the value of human rights and the media's role in defending them.
- Modifying legislation in Iraq that impede press and expression freedom.
- Supporting the Iraqi media's independence.
- Guarding Iraqi journalists against intimidation and coercion.
- Hiring journalists in the Iraqi media who come from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds.
- Creating media content that captures Iraqi society's rich cultural and social variety.
- Raising public awareness of the value of human rights and the function.

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