Hamburger Stiftung

—————— für politisch Ver­folgte **Vor­sit­zen­der: Peter Tschentscher Ge­schäfts­füh­ren­der Vor­stand:**

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**Press Release**

**Kamal Chomani, Kurdish journalist from Iraq**

**Latest guest with the Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People in 2018**

Hamburg, April 20, 2018

The Iraqi Kurd Kamal Chomani (32) is an internationally renowned journalist, blogger, political commentator and analyst. His work mainly focuses on the situation of Kurdish minorities in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. From 2009 to 2011, Chomani worked as a correspondent for “Reporters without Borders“ in the Kurdish areas in Iraq. Since 2010, he has been a columnist for “The Kurdistan Tribune“ and other publications in the region. For “*The Times of Israel*“ he regularly publicizes a blog.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, Kamal Chomani has long been considered a politically inconvenient commentator. He narrowly escaped two abduction attempts carried out by unidentified people in 2011 and 2015. But his situation became life-threatening, when in 2017 he publically opposed the plans for a referendum vote for independence by the Northern Iraqi Kurds. Chomani was one of the authors of a public letter warning against the Iraqi central government’s reaction and the impending instability in the entire region. So far, the letter has been signed by more than 100 journalists and intellectuals. Since then, he is considered a fraudster and traitor to the Kurdish cause. The Kurdish police threatened to arrest him and he even received death threats by top politicians of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP): “Kamal Chomani should be silenced with a bullet.“ In recent months, the journalist went into hiding in his home country.

If he had left the country for its neighbor Turkey, Chomani would have been in grave danger due to his criticism of President Erdogan’s politics. The Turkish military offensive and conquering of the Northern Syrian region Afrin, which is primarily inhabited by the Kurdish population, is seen as the initial step of implementing a plan to enforce displacement of around 3.5 million Arabic-Syrian refugees that had fled to Turkey. The aim of this “Arabization strategy“ is to establish a largely Kurd-free settlement area in the Syrian-Turkish border region. Currently, Ankara is threatening with an expansion of these military operations to additional Kurdish areas along the Iraqi-Turkish border.

**During his year in Hamburg, Kamal Chomani wants to draw attention to the increasingly desperate Kurdish situation, especially at public events. Moreover, he wants to network with German and European politicians as well as with representatives of the civil society.**

**The Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People is very happy to provide a safe place for Kamal Chomani in Hamburg and support him in realizing his plans.**

We are very grateful for the support of the organizations “Journalists Helping Journalists“, “Foundation of Hamburg Press“ und “Reporters without Borders“ in Paris and Berlin.

**Press Contact: Martina Bäurle Mobile: +49 151-56 311316**

**Office +49 40 42863-5757** [www.Hamburger-Stiftung.de](http://www.Hamburger-Stiftung.de)