

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/irak-maliki-government-restricts-media-25-06-2014,46520.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Iraq

Crackdown

Maliki government restricts media freedom

25 June 2014

After Jordan, Egypt bows to pressure and closes anti-Maliki TV stations. Reporters Without Borders deplores the Iraqi government's growing control over the local media and the closure of three Egypt-based Iraqi TV stations, Al-Baghdadiya, Al-Rafidin, and Al-Hadath as a result of pressure from the Iraqi government.

The closure of [Al-Baghdadiya](#), [Al-Rafidin](#), and [Al-Hadath](#) which used Egypt's NileSat satellite to broadcast to Iraq, was announced by the Egyptian authorities on 18 June. The move came just a couple of weeks after Jordanian police raided and closed *Al-Abasiya*, an Amman-based TV station that opposed Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki.

The three latest closures were the result of a complaint by the Iraqi communications ministry to the Egyptian production company that hosted the TV stations. It [accused](#) them of broadcasting reports that "attack the security forces and Iraqi national unity."

Plainclothes Iraqi security forces with no warrant previously raided *Al-Baghdadiya's* TV studios in Baghdad on 16 June, removing or smashing equipment and using violence against the station's security guards. A security source quoted by the station said deputy interior minister [Adnan Al-Assadi](#) was behind the raid. Witnesses said the plainclothesmen arrived in military vehicles.

In April, an Iraqi court had given *Al-Baghdadiya* [permission](#) to resume operating in Iraq for the first time since 25 November 2010, when all of its bureaux in Iraq were closed on the orders of the Media and Communications Commission.

As a result of the repeated harassment, *Al-Baghdadiya's* Iraqi-Greek owner, Aun Hassin Al-Khashluk, an outspoken critic of Maliki, announced on 19 June that he intended to [close](#) the station for good.

"We firmly condemn the Iraqi government's determined crackdown on the media and the measures with no legal basis that have been taken against TV stations opposed to Nouri Al-Maliki's policies", said Reporters Without Borders deputy research chief Virginie Dangles.

"Other governments in the region are acting as accomplices to this crackdown by bowing to pressure. At the same time, news media and journalists must act with independence and professionalism and play a watchdog role by ceasing to fuel political, ethnic and religious tension and differences."

Toxic climate

The current political and security crisis in Iraq is having a major impact on society and the media, both those based in Iraq and those [broadcasting from abroad](#). Politicized and polarized, journalists and media are the victims of this deterioration and, at the same time, contributing to it.

Journalists in Kerbala (100 km southwest of Baghdad), demonstrated on 15 June to demand that the local authorities enlist them in the Iraqi armed forces and thereby reinforce the "fight against the terrorist offensive."

A list of [directives](#) that the Media and Communications Commission sent to the media on 18 June includes a ban on meeting and interviewing persons wanted by judicial authorities and a ban on broadcasting messages issued by armed groups.

It seems that the authorities hope that this will help them to portray the armed opposition as

consisting of ISIS and nothing else, although Baathist forces and Sunni tribal groups are fighting alongside it.

The communications ministry announced the same day that the Internet was being temporarily disconnected in several provinces including Anbar, Nineveh, Saladin and Kirkuk, thereby denying the Iraqi public access to social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

The measure was to "prevent the dissemination of false information relayed by the enemy at a time when the security situation is a source of concern," the communications ministry said.

The communications ministry had already asked Internet Service Providers on 13 June to block access to certain social network sites and other services such as Skype, Viber and Whatsapp.

Armed individuals meanwhile still control the media in Mosul, Anbar and Saladin provinces. ISIS set fire to the [Kurdistan News TV](#) station's offices in the Ta'mim district of Mosul on 16 June.

The day before, ISIS went to the home of [the brother](#) of **Ali Al-Hamdani** the correspondent of the Shiite satellite TV station *Al-Faiha* in Saladin province (170 km north of the capital). His family had left the house a few days earlier after receiving threats.

Other images



JPEG - 29.4 kb
633 x 222 pixels



JPEG - 20.8 kb
486 x 222 pixels

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 24.2 kb)
-