

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/irak-journalist-abducted-from-baghdad-s-07-04-2011,39971.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Iraq

Forced disappearance

Journalist abducted from Baghdad's Rusafa prison

7 April 2011

Reporters Without Borders is very concerned about the fate of **Saad Al-Awsi**, the editor of the weekly *Al-Shahid Al-Mustaqil* (*The Independent Witness*), who was kidnapped by gunmen on 25 March from Rusafa prison in southeastern Baghdad where he was serving a one-year sentence.

"We call on the Iraqi government to do everything possible to find this journalist and arrest those responsible for his abduction," Reporters Without Borders said. "It must also shed light on the reasons for his arrest and detention, which the authorities repeatedly disputed. We remind them that freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Iraqi constitution."

His family, which has received no news of him since his disappearance, wrote a letter on 3 April to Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki and to the head of the intelligence services, Zuhair Gharbawi, who they blame for his abduction.

Awsi was arrested during a search of his home in mid-April 2010 after writing articles criticising the political situation and Prime Minister Maliki in particular. A Baghdad criminal court sentenced him in August 2010 to a year in prison on charges of defamation and publishing classified information.

He wrote to the prime minister in February of this year asking him to intercede to get him released, and insisting that none of his articles contained classified information. A delegation of journalists was prevented from visiting him in March. During the "Day of Rage" demonstrations on 25 February, journalists protested against the silence of the authorities on the subject of his detention.

As reported at the time, members of the security forces raided the headquarters of Awsi's newspaper on 5 February 2010, during the run-up to the following month's parliamentary elections. They seized computer equipment and chased the employees away. The office remained closed for two weeks. His arrest followed two months later.
