

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/iraq-provincial-police-spokesman-05-04-2011,39957.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Iraq

Released

Police officer freed after being held for 24 hours over critical articles

6 April 2011

Reporters Without Borders is pleased to learn that **Murtadha Al-Shahtur**, the police spokesman in the governorate Dhi Qar and a contributor to the local newspaper *Al-Zaman* and other newspapers and websites, was released on the evening of 4 April, a day after being arrested in Dhi Qar's capital, Nasariyah, by members of the Baghdad government's special forces.

04.04.2011 - Provincial police spokesman arrested for criticizing government as journalist

Reporters Without Borders is appalled to learn that **Murtadha Al-Shahtur**, the police spokesman in the governorate Dhi Qar who also writes as a journalist for the local newspaper *Al-Zaman* and other newspapers and websites, was arrested in the provincial capital of Nasariyah (370 km southeast of Baghdad) on 3 April by the central government's special security forces.

"This arbitrary arrest is a flagrant violation of Iraq's laws and constitution, as well as the international obligations signed and ratified by the government, one that recently boasted of not having any journalist in prison," Reporters Without Borders said. "We call for Shahtur's immediate release."

According to report by the [Journalistic Freedoms Observatory](#) that was quoted in the [local media](#), Shahtur was arrested for writing several articles more than six weeks ago in which he openly criticized government policy as regards security and public services. One of his articles, published in February on the *Kitabat* website, was particularly scathing about the province's electricity problems.

According to the JFO's Nasariyah representative, Akram Al-Tamimi, several local politicians had taken a dim view of his articles and had not hesitated to "request this arrest in order to silence his criticism." Ghassan Saleh, a lawyer who has spoken to Shahtur since his arrest, told the JFO he was arrested on an order issued by the government, not one issued by any court.
