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<http://www.rsf.org/iraq-syrian-conflict-leads-to-pdk-04-06-2014,46394.html>

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Middle East/North Africa - Iraq

Kurdistan

## Syrian conflict leads to PDK reprisals against pro-PKK media

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Journalists, news media and freedom of information in Iraqi Kurdistan have been hit by a recent increase in the traditional tension between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (PDK), whose leader, Masoud Barzani, is Iraqi Kurdistan's president, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the Turkish armed separatist group that has many fighters based in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The friction between the rival groups has been exacerbated by the war in neighbouring Syria, where the PKK's Syrian wing, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), is the leading political force in the mainly Kurdish areas in the north and has been harassing pro-PDK institutions and expelling pro-Barzani politicians.

The PDK retaliated in Iraqi Kurdistan on 19 May against [eight pro-PKK entities](#) in three of the cities it controls, Erbil, Dohuk and Zakho. The targeted entities included two media outlets: [DIHA](#), a Turkish news agency, and the monthly *Rojava Welat*. Their offices were closed and their journalists were detained for several hours.

Various groups, including the Organization of Free Women in Kurdistan (RJAK), one of the entities targeted by the 19 May operation, held a demonstration yesterday outside the parliament in Erbil.

**Wahbi Damir**, *DIHA's* senior representative in Iraqi Kurdistan, said there was no legal basis for the closure of *DIHA's* offices. "We were not shown any warrant," he told Reporters Without Borders, despite being warned not to talk to the media. "The security forces have closed our offices with all our journalistic material inside."

Najiba Umlar of the Party for a Democratic Solution in Kurdistan (PÇDK), whose offices were also attacked and closed, told Reporters Without Borders that the PDK is preventing her party and the pro-PKK media from working freely in PDK-controlled areas. "The PDK does not tolerate our views on the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey and Syria," she said.

For their part, pro-PDK media are finding it hard to operate freely in PYD-controlled areas in northern Syria.

Reporters Without Borders urges the various political parties to respect the work of journalists. At the same time, media and journalists must be seen to work in an independent and professional manner, fulfilling their watchdog role, instead of fuelling traditional political tension and rivalry.

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