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<http://www.rsf.org/iraq-well-known-irreverent-journalist-08-09-2011,40948.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Iraq

Political murder

Well-known irreverent journalist shot dead in his home

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Reporters Without Borders roundly condemns the well-known journalist **Hadi Al-Mahdi's** murder in Baghdad today, on the eve of nationwide protests that he supported. His body was found at around 7 p.m. in his home in the central district of Al-Karada. He had been shot twice in the head. There can be no doubt that his murder was politically motivated.

Offering its sincere condolences to his family, friends and colleagues, Reporters Without Borders urges the authorities to quickly investigate this murder and to assign all the necessary resources to ensure that those responsible are identified and brought to justice. This crime cannot go unpunished.

Aged 44, a Shiite and married to a Kurd, Mahdi hosted a talk show called "To whoever listens" on *Radio Demozy* (104,01 FM). His irreverence, his well-observed criticism that spared no one, neither the prime minister nor his detractors, and his readiness to tackle subjects ranging from corruption to the deplorable state of the Iraqi educational system made it one of the most popular talk shows in Baghdad.

It was clear from the messages that Mahdi had sent to relatives that he knew he was in danger. He had received many warnings and had told friends two days ago that something terrible could happen (http://alalemya.com/alalemya_news/0_2011_5_/11_/11_9_1/8-9/hadi-al-mahdi.html). But he was determined to tough it out, regardless of the risks.

After covering a demonstration in Baghdad's Tahrir Square on 25 February, he and three fellow journalists were arrested, threatened and beaten.

Shortly after graduating from Baghdad's Academy of Fine Arts in 1989, Mahdi fled to Syria and then to Sweden and did not return until 2007, after nearly a decade in exile. He began hosting "To whoever listens" for Radio Demozy, an independent station, a year later. (A *New York Times* profile of Mahdi)

He was the seventh Iraqi journalist to be murdered since the start of 2011 and the 12th since the United States announced the withdrawal of its combat troops in August 2010.

Mahdi's murder comes exactly a month after the Iraqi parliament adopted a law on the protection of journalists on 9 August.
