

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/irak-islamic-state-holding-at-least-20-21-11-2014,47265.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Syria

Abductions

Islamic State holding at least 20 media workers hostage in Mosul

21 November 2014

As the US-led international coalition continues its airstrikes in Iraq and northern Syria in a bid to halt the Jihadi advance, Islamic State is stepping up its persecution of journalists, either threatening to kill them, kidnapping them or mistreating those it is already holding.

Islamic State is now holding at least 20 journalists in Mosul (in northern Iraq), the largest city it controls.

According to the [Journalistic Freedoms Observatory](#) (JFO), Islamic State [kidnapped](#) nine journalists more than a month ago, six of whom it is still holding and three it released. Then it kidnapped another 14 reporters, cameramen and TV engineers and technicians – most employed by *Sama Mosul TV* – in Mosul in late October and early November.

JFO also reports that IS has issued a [new list](#) of names of 50 journalists and media workers who are personally threatened. This has obviously increased the already considerable alarm in media circles in Mosul.

“IS has been pursuing its brutal policies against all and sundry while systematically persecuting the news media and their employees since the start of its offensive in Iraq,” Reporters Without Borders programme director Lucie Morillon said.

“Journalists working in territory occupied by IS, especially Mosul, are exposed to extreme danger. They are being targeted because of their profession, because they automatically posed a threat to the Jihadi group’s propaganda. The authorities must do everything possible to protect these guarantors of freedom of information and therefore all the other freedoms, whether in Mosul or other war-torn regions.”

Terror reigns in Mosul, with journalists and other civilians unable to leave the city and too scared to talk for fear of IS reprisals.

According to JFO, the Jihadi group seized control of *Sama Mosul TV*, which is operated by the governor of Nineveh province, during its June offensive. JFO also reports that, since the start of its offensive in northern Iraq, IS has arrested and then released more than 17 journalists after interrogating them and getting them to sign undertakings about their journalistic activities.

IS takes advantage of information “black holes”

Some media have quoted anonymous sources in Mosul as [saying](#) IS carries out night-time operations with the aim of finding journalists and forcing them to work under its orders or taking advantage of their professional expertise. Many journalists feel closely watched and some have been arrested at home at night.

The information coming from Mosul and the other cities that IS controls or disputes, such as Tikrit and Samarra (in Salah-ad-Din province) and Fallujah and Ramadi (in Anbar province), is hard to verify.

Local media have briefly reported murders or abductions of journalists by IS but it has not been possible to confirm the reports or identify the sources. IS exploits the existence of these information “black holes” to deploy its own media and dominate “coverage,” paying a great deal of attention to

its image, whether for recruitment purposes or to inspire terror.

A long list of crimes in IS-controlled regions in Syria

As fighting continues in Kobane, the Jihadis are still occupying almost entire regions in parts of northern and eastern Syria including the city of Raqqa and the eastern oil province of Deir Ezzor.

Some journalists are still missing or held hostage by armed groups including IS. The latest was abducted from his home in Deir Ezzor on 14 November. According to our sources, he was targeted because of his contacts with TV stations such as *Orient TV* that are on an [IS blacklist](#).

A UN commission of enquiry into war crimes in Syria [published](#) a detailed report about IS on 14 November based on the accounts of around 300 victims and witnesses. According to the UN, former detainees said journalists and fixers who have worked for the foreign media are among those who are treated worst in IS detention centres.

According to the tally kept by Reporters Without Borders, two foreign journalists, eight Syrian journalists and one Iraqi journalist have been killed by IS, which is currently holding one foreign journalist hostage, and which has kidnapped at least 20 Iraqi journalists in Iraq.

Since the start of the conflict in Syria, around 20 Syrian journalists have gone missing or are being held by IS or other armed groups.

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