

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/irak-woman-reporter-killed-in-clashes-11-08-2014,46786.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Iraq

Second journalist killed

Woman reporter killed in clashes in Kurdistan between Islamic State and Peshmerga

11 August 2014

She worked for *Firat*, a news agency that supports Turkey's PKK

As the United States began air strikes in support of Iraqi Kurdistan's attempts to resist the Islamic State's advance in northern Iraq, a Turkish journalist of Kurdish origin was killed during clashes between Kurdish and Islamic State forces in Makhmour refugee camp, 40 km southwest of Erbil, on 8 August.

The journalist was **Leyla Yildizhan**, who worked for the *Firat news agency* using the pseudonym of **Deniz Firat**. She was covering an attack on the camp by the Islamic State's Jihadi fighters when she was fatally injured in the chest by shrapnel from an exploding mortar shell.

Her body was repatriated to Turkey the next day for burial in her home province of Van, in the east of the country.

"An investigation must be carried out to determine the exact circumstances of Yildizhan's death," said Reporters Without Borders, which offers its condolences to her family and friends.

"The tragic nature of this incident should serve as a reminder to all the parties to this conflict that the work of journalists is crucial in wartime. Every effort must be made to guarantee their safety, along with the safety of all sectors of the civilian population."

Based in the Netherlands, the *Firat news agency* supports the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Turkish organization with bases in Iraqi Kurdistan that wants self-determination for Kurds in Turkey. Yildizhan also worked for [Rohani TV](#), [Sterk TV](#), [IMC TV](#) and other media.

She had [done](#) a lot of reporting from the front lines in Syria, in the areas with a mainly Kurdish population such as Rojava, and in Iraq. As she [grew up](#) in the Makhmour refugee camp, she knew the region well, colleagues say.

Yildizhan was the second journalist to be killed in Iraq since the start of the Islamist offensive in June. The first was *Al-Ahad TV* cameraman **Khaled Ali Hamada**, who was [killed](#) in Diyala (northeast of Baghdad) on 16 June.

The US air strikes in northern Iraq are aimed at stopping the advance on Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan autonomic region, that the Islamic State forces began in late July. It has led to fierce fighting with the Kurdish forces, known as Peshmerga.

According to media reports, the attack on the city of Makhmour caused the death of about [20 people](#), mostly members of Islamic State, the Jihadi group that used to call itself Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIS).

The Kurdish forces finally retook Makhmour and the nearby town of Gwer yesterday in an operation made possible by US support, [said](#) Halgord Hekmat, a spokesman for the Kurdish forces.

The United Nations [created](#) the camp at Makhmour (located in Nineveh province) to protect PKK members and families in the 1990s, when the Turkish authorities were waging an intense campaign against the banned PKK.

It has been [hard to access](#) Facebook and Twitter in Iraqi Kurdistan since 8 August. Some sources have cited security grounds and the need to avoid demoralizing the population as the reason. Reporters Without Borders has also learned that many independent media have been prevented from travelling to Kurdistan to cover the fighting.
