

Reporters Without Borders

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Middle East/North Africa - Syria

Hostage

Japanese government urged to obtain release of journalist held by IS

22 January 2015

Reporters Without Borders calls on the Japanese government to do everything it can to obtain the release of Kenji Goto, a Japanese freelance journalist under threat of imminent execution by the Jihadi militant group Islamic State.

In a video posted online on 20 January, IS demanded 200 million dollars in ransom for the release of Goto and Haruna Yukawa, another Japanese citizen, threatening to kill them if the ransom was not paid in 72 hours.

Less than 24 hours is left before the deadline expires.

Goto left Japan on 22 October with the aim of filming IS fighters in Syria and was captured in November while trying to locate Yukawa. According to the Japanese media, he originally met Yukawa a few months before Yukawa was taken hostage in October.

"We take note of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's pledge to do everything possible to obtain the release of the two hostages," Reporters Without Borders programme director Lucie Morillon said.

"It is vital that the Japanese government should seek the help of all the 'strategic' states in the region and their diplomatic networks. Efforts must be pooled to end Islamic State's barbaric hostage industry. Following last year's execution of journalists, we must accept that all options should be envisaged in order to save lives."

Goto is one of the few freelance journalists to have provided Japanese TV viewers with video footage of the various bloody conflicts under way in the Middle East.

Syria is nowadays the world's most dangerous country for journalists. In August 2012, **Mika Yamamoto**, a Japanese reporter for the *Japan Press* agency, was [killed in Aleppo](#) while covering fighting between government forces and rebels in the eastern district of Suleiman Al-Halabi.

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