

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/iraq-iraq-bans-local-printing-and-16-01-2014,45732.html>

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Middle East/North Africa - Iraq

Worrying ban

## Iraq bans local printing and distribution of Saudi daily

16 January 2014

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Reporters Without Borders condemns the Iraqi government's decision to ban the printing and distribution in Iraq of [Al-Sharq Al-Awsat](#), a Saudi-owned pan-Arab daily newspaper.

On 14 January, Iraqi security forces [raided the company](#) responsible for printing and distributing the newspaper throughout Iraq and ordered it to suspend operations on the grounds that publishing and distributing a newspaper in this way violates Iraqi law. They also confiscated all copies of Al-Sharq Al-Awsat on sale in Iraq.

"The relentlessness with which the authorities eliminated the newspaper's entire issue confirms that the reasons given were just a pretext," Reporters Without Borders said.

"The indefinite ban on *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* at time of political tension between Saudi Arabia and Iraq sets a very worrying precedent for freedom information in Iraq. This draconian decision reinforces the impression that Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki's government is [trying to control coverage of current development](#) very closely.

"This ban violates [article 36](#) of the constitution, guaranteeing press and printing freedom, and Iraq's international obligations. We therefore call on the authorities to rescind this prohibition and to respect freedom of information, which is essential for a functioning democracy."

*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat's* representatives began negotiations with the authorities with a view to getting the ban lifted. The outcome is not yet known.

The growing signs of government hostility towards certain critical news media does not bode well for the already fraught climate for freedom of information in Iraq, where [journalists](#) are often the targets of physical [attacks by non-state groups](#).

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