

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/iraq-editor-held-illegally-for-six-days-27-04-2012,42386.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Iraq

Warning

Editor held illegally for six days because of corruption coverage

27 April 2012

Reporters Without Borders firmly condemns the way **Sherwan Sherwani**, the editor of a monthly based in Dohuk, in the far north of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan Region, was arrested and held for six days, until finally freed on bail on 25 April.

"Sherwani's detention was arbitrary and illegal under the Law of Journalism in Kurdistan (Law No. 35)" Reporters Without Borders said. "The way this journalist was treated has all the hallmarks of political reprisals for his coverage of corruption allegations. We call on the authorities to drop the charges against him and abandon any prosecution plans."

Sherwani, whose monthly, *Bashur Magazine*, often has investigative coverage of political corruption in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), was arrested by police on 20 April in Akre, a locality on the eastern outskirts of Dohuk that is controlled by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), one of the autonomous region's two main ruling parties.

The arrest was the result of a complaint by the Akre municipal government about a May 2011 article accusing the head of the municipality of embezzling public funds, a claim for which the article provide some evidence.

During the six days he was held, members of the KDP security forces transferred him to Erbil, where he was taken to task for an old interview with a Kurdish businessman who had accused one of KRG President Massoud Barzani's brothers of extorting 32 million US dollars from him. From Erbil he was taken to Pirmam (7 km to the northeast of Erbil), where the Barzani family lives, before being taken back to Dohuk.

Criticizing Barzani, his family or the KDP or reporting corruption allegations in which they might in any way be involved are all off-limits for journalists in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Sherwani was finally freed on bail of 1 million dinars (650 euros) following pressure from the journalists' union and NGOs. "I will continue to do my duty as a journalist, pressing on with my investigative coverage of corruption despites the risks involved," he said on his release.

Reporters Without Borders also calls on the KRG authorities to provide a completely transparent explanation of their refusal to allow the publication of a book by **Aso Jabar** called "Hell of Truth," which describes press freedom violations by the KRG and its abusive treatment journalists, writers and activists.

An article in the [Kurdistan Tribune](#) quotes Jabar as saying the culture ministry refused to issue a publication permit because of its content. The article also reported that Jabar fled to the United States.

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- Editor held illegally for six days because of corruption coverage - In arabic, (PDF - 277.1 kb)
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