RSF calls for release of journalist held in Iraqi Kurdistan

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Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls on Iraqi Kurdistan's autonomous government to shed light on the circumstances of journalist Zuber Bradosti's arrest by its intelligence services three weeks ago and to order his release.

The family of Bradosti, who works for *Roj News*, a news agency that supports Turkey's outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), has had no news of him since he was arrested for questioning on 19 July.

In the absence of any news, *Roj News* has published an article about his disappearance, reporting that he was heading for the Soran region, in the northeast of Iraqi Kurdistan, at the time of his arrest.

"We ask the authorities to ensure that Zuber Bradosti is released at once and comes to no physical harm," RSF's Middle East desk said. "The Kurdistan autonomous government has a duty to protect journalists and to prevent them from being arrested for questioning and detained without justification."

This is not the first time that Bradosti has been arrested by the Kurdish intelligence services, *Roj News* editor **Shna Faiq** told RSF. He was previously arrested in March on the grounds that he had taken photos in "forbidden areas" during Turkey's military operations in the region, she said.

Kurdish officials meanwhile claim that Bradosti's journalistic activities were not the reason for his arrest.

"He is a political activist who is linked to the Peshmerga [Iraqi Kurdistan's army] and who is a member of the PKK," a source close to the Iraqi intelligence services said on condition of anonymity. "He gathered information for this organization, which is conducting a campaign contrary to the Iraqi Kurdistan region's interests."

Bradosti's arrest is all the more worrying because another *Roj News*journalist, **Wedat Hussein Ali**, was found dead, bearing the marks of torture, several hours after been arrested in similar circumstances in Dohuk, in the northwest of Iraqi Kurdistan, in August 2016.

Kurdistan's autonomous government promised an investigation into Ali's murder in order to identify those responsible, but the investigation has made no progress and those responsible are still at large.

Iraq is ranked 156th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2019 World Press Freedom Index.

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