

Iraq: Oct '07

Author: [IWPR Iraq](#)

Leading Arab news website runs a series of IWPR features on the state of media in Iraq.

IWPR's special report on media has been republished by an Arab/English language Middle East news website, Menassat.com, aimed at providing a platform for Arab journalism and empowering Arab journalists.

The special report on media provided in-depth coverage of an important and highly sensitive topic in Iraq. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 124 journalists and 49 media workers have been killed in Iraq since 2003. Media rights organisations agree that it the most dangerous place in the world for journalists to work.

IWPR Iraq's coverage focused primarily on the violence and threats that many - if not most - Iraqi journalists face. Iraqi journalists are increasingly working undercover and refuse to cover certain topics or cross "red lines", as the report *Climate of Fear Stymies Basra Reporters* explained.

Prior to her death, Sahar al-Haideri, an IWPR correspondent from Mosul who was shot to death earlier this year, crossed many of those invisible - yet threatening - red lines. For the special report on media, she wrote about the number of dwindling photographers in Mosul. (*Militants Pick Off Mosul Snappers*).

This month, Haideri was honoured posthumously with the Kurt Schork Award for local journalists. In a blog written after the ceremony, Reuters political editor Sean Maguire noted that Haideri was targeted by insurgents "who objected to the clarity and fearlessness with which she reported the murderous campaigns of intimidation being waged by sectarian groups in Iraq".

Menassat.com, a new Beirut-based website focusing on the Arab media, paid tribute to Haideri's work and republished IWPR's special report on media.

The reports were "very compelling", said Gert Van Langendonck, an editorial consultant for the website. He said that he was particularly impressed by Haideri's story.

"I had never read that before, that you could get killed for taking wedding pictures," he said.

Van Langendonck also praised IWPR's work for providing unique - and much needed - perspectives from Iraq. He said the reports were "from heaven" for Menassat, which publishes in both Arabic and English.

"In general, compelling pieces by Iraqi reporters are rare," he said. "And since western reporters don't get out much anymore, any compelling pieces from Iraq are rare."

Ziad Khalaf al-Ajili, a spokesman for the Journalists' Freedom Observatory, an organisation that advocates for journalists' rights in Iraq, also endorsed IWPR's work.

IWPR's stories "are on truth and conveying truth. They are accurate and the news [is published] in a courageous, professional and neutral manner", he said.

Ajili said IWPR stories for "accurately reflecting the realities" of Iraq.

"They also cover issues that are not covered by the local press, such as the problems that militia groups and insurgents create," he said.

IWPR's accuracy and its storytelling style, maintained Ajili, have built public interest and trust, "Readers trust the stories. They believe the information."

Tiare Rath is IWPR's Middle East editor.

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