

Police in Kidnap Crackdown

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Child freed after arrest of two alleged members of a kidnapping cell.

Security forces in the Kurdish town of Kalar have arrested two members of what they believe to be a criminal ring that has been involved in kidnapping children and contractors in Iraq.

Dilshad Bander Ali, a Kurd from Falluja, and Meki Jabir, an Arab from Baghdad, were found several days ago at Ali's father's home in Kalar along with a missing two-year-old child.

Ali's father and brother were also arrested when police swooped in after receiving a tip off from neighbours. All are currently in police custody and being questioned.

Police say the young boy, who has now been returned to his mother, was kidnapped in Baghdad on March 24 then moved from the capital to Kalar on July 1. About 10,000 US dollars of the 40,000 dollars demanded in ransom had been paid so far, said police.

As this edition of ICR went to press, IWPR reporters were unable to speak to the four detained men or members of their family.

Although the international media has focused on the kidnapping of foreigners, most recently of diplomats in Iraq, ordinary Iraqis are abducted on a near daily basis by criminal gangs taking advantage of the lawlessness and chaos in the country.

Colonel Nawshirwan Ahmed, security chief for Kalar, located about 150 kilometres south of Sulaimaniyah, claimed the two men arrested are followers of Sheikh Abdullah al-Janabi, the leading Sunni cleric in Falluja who has supported the insurgency but denounced those who target innocent Iraqis.

Judge Nizar Hasan, a senior legal official in Kalar, said a phone book was found during a search of the home that contained contact information for suspected insurgents. Kalar authorities said they would work with security forces in other parts of the country to investigate the information contained in the book and analyse its significance.

Ahmed said the authorities believe Ali and Jabir are members of a group of ten alleged kidnappers who have carried out dozens of abductions. He declined to name the group but said the remaining members live in Baghdad.

Since the arrests, the Kalar authorities have stepped up security in the area, setting up two checkpoints on the outskirts of the town. Families entering Kalar must fill out information sheets with their personal details and provide a copy of their national identification card.

"We are doing this to protect those who live here and arrest those who come to instigate disorder," said Ahmed.

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Location: Iraqi Kurdistan
Iraq

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