

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1539
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Reporters Sans Frontières
Titel:	Fixer harassed by Kurdish authorities in northeastern Syria
Udgivet:	25. juni 2021
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	7. september 2021

Document #2054464

RSF – Reporters Sans Frontières

Fixer harassed by Kurdish authorities in northeastern Syria

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the gangster-like methods used by the Asayish (security forces) in the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria to repeatedly detain Kamiran Saadoun, a Kurdish fixer who has had to flee to neighbouring Iraqi Kurdistan.

A journalist who has worked as a fixer for international media such as *ABC News* and *NPR* since 2014 and who was [awarded](#) the Kurt Schork prize for best fixer by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2020, Saadoun fled across the border to Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, three days after his heavy-handed arrest by Asayish in Raqqa on 16 June.

He told RSF he was [arrested](#) in Raqqa while working with a female reporter for the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant*. Gunmen came to his hotel room in the middle of the night and took him away without allowing him to tell the reporter.

He said they bundled him into a car, blindfolded him and drove him to a detention centre, punching and kicking him and threatening him with a rifle on the way. Once there, they subjected him to an interrogation before releasing him the next morning.

This is not the first time that Saadoun has been harassed by the Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria. He said the Asayish have been subjecting him to intimidation since the start of 2020, when he was banned from working as a journalist for four months for “harming the image of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).”

Saadoun was arrested for the first time at a checkpoint near the Iraqi border on 26 February 2021, after accompanying a foreign journalist, and it was only following pressure from family and friends that he was released the same day. The threats became more explicit at the start of May when he was summoned for interrogation and was accused of supplying information about SDF military positions and trenches, which he denies.

“The accusations made against Kamiran Saadoun are extremely serious and unacceptable,” said Sabrina Bennoui, the head of RSF’s Middle East desk. “Harassing and threatening a journalist in this way because his journalism annoys people is worthy of the most gangsterish regimes. The Kurdish administration must do everything to ensure that those responsible answer for what they did. Failure to act will amount to tacit approval.”

Saadoun’s case is not isolated. After disappearing on 16 June, freelance journalist **Ahmad Mustafa Al-Hassan** reappeared in an SDF detention centre in Raqqa a few days later. According to RSF’s tally, he is the [fourth journalist](#) to be detained by the SDF since the start of the year.

Syria is ranked 173rd out of 180 countries in RSF’s 2021 [World Press Freedom Index](#).

ecoi.net summary:

Autonomous Administration of
North and East Syria: Journalist
working with international media
fled to Iraqi Kurdistan after being
harassed, detained and interrogated
by security forces

Country:

Syrian Arab Republic

Source:

[RSF – Reporters Sans Frontières](#)

Original link:

<https://rsf.org/en/news/fixer-harassed-kurdish-authorities-northeastern-syria>

Document type:

Appeal or News Release

Language:

English

Published:

25 June 2021

Document ID:

2054464

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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

