

Beat: Miscellaneous

Islamic State publicly executes Iraqi journalist in northern Iraq

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USPA News - Islamic State fighters have publicly executed an Iraqi journalist who was abducted in the country's north last month, Al Jazeera reported on Saturday, adding that his brother was also killed. It follows the high-profile executions of two Western journalists earlier this year.

Raad Mohamed Al-Azaoui, a cameraman for Sama Salah Aldeen TV, was abducted by Islamic State fighters on September 7 when he was working in Samara, in the northern province of Saladin, while accompanied by about 20 locals. The group later issued threats to behead Al-Azaoui after he refused to work for the Islamic State. In a report on Saturday, Al Jazeera said Al-Azaoui was publicly shot to death in Samara on Friday, along with his brother who had also been kidnapped and two unidentified civilians. "He did nothing wrong; his only crime was to be a cameraman. He was just doing his job," a relative was quoted as saying. In a statement last month, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) expressed "grave concern" over Al-Azaoui's abduction after the Islamic State had issued a threat to behead him. The media watchdog said the abduction also highlights the mounting dangers journalists face while working in the region. "The Islamic State since its emergence has made journalists a terror target," Virginie Dangles, RSF's assistant research director, said last month. "The terrorist organization, in setting up an apparatus for kidnapping and executing news professionals, is attempting to eliminate all those who refuse to swear allegiance to ISIS." Over the last few months alone, the Islamic State has beheaded American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff in an attempt to stop U.S. military intervention in the region. The beheadings were shown in two separate videos which shocked Western nations and which called attention to the plight of about 20 other journalists who remain missing in Syria. Iraqi and Syrian journalists themselves have also faced mounting dangers under the Islamic State. Journalist Ahmed Khaled Al-Dlimi, who is known as Bassem Ahmed Al Watani, was abducted in the Iraqi city of Tikrit on August 15 and his fate remains unknown. There are also grave concerns for Yazidi journalist Tarek Salah Shankali, who was captured on August 13. The Islamic State (IS), which was previously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS), is an al-Qaeda splinter group which declared itself an Islamic caliphate earlier this year after seizing much of northeastern Syria and making huge gains in parts of Iraq. Their rule has been marked by brutal violence - such as beheadings and crucifixions - of anyone opposing the "caliphate." Since early August, U.S. forces have carried out hundreds of airstrikes in Iraq to protect U.S. interests and to assist Iraqi forces as they attempt to fight off ISIS. A coalition of countries - including France, the United Kingdom, and Australia - have since joined that effort. The United States - along with several Arab countries - have also launched a separate air campaign against ISIS in northern Syria.

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