Beat: Local

Iraq: a journalist arrested again for being critical of the government

Samir Obeid

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USPA NEWS - The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) joins its affiliate, the Norwegian Union of Journalists (NJ), in condemning the arrest on 2 February in Baghdad of Samir Obeid. The journalist, who is a dual Norwegian and Iraqi national, was arrested after accusing the Iraqi government of corruption.

His arrest, which is the second in 4 months, follows an article he published recently on his Facebook account accusing the Iraqi government of corrupt practices.

According to reports, Samir Obeid who works as freelance journalist and political commentator for various Iraqi and regional media, was arrested by men who identified themselves as Iraqi security forces at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Baghdad on 2 February while he was on his way to visit some relatives in Najaf city.

His brother Hassan Obeid reportedly said that the authorities also seized his car, luggage and money without warrant.

His family and lawyer told media that they haven´t been able to contact the journalist, adding that the authorities refused to tell them in which prison he´s being held or confirm whether charges had been filed against him.

Obeid was previously Opens external link in new windowarrested on 22 October at his home in Al Qadisyah neighborhood in Baghdad on allegations of spreading fake news, later replaced with the accusation of communicating with foreign entities, following his publication of an article in which he claimed that the prime minister´s motive behind the Iraqi government taking back the control of Kirkuk city was to benefit international oil companies.

The journalist was detained for seven weeks and finally released on 12 December, one day after the court found him not guilty. The government appealed and the appeal hearing is scheduled for 19 February.

Both the NJ and the IFJ urge the authorities for his immediate release.

“We ask the Iraqi authorities to respect the Baghdad court´s decision from December and release our colleague Samir Obeid immediately. All political leaders should tolerate criticism and diverse opinions without interference,“ said Hege Iren Frantzen, NJ President.

“The IFJ and NJ are very concerned about the fate of Obeid. The Iraqi government is in breach of its obligations, keeping him in secret detention and denying him his right to meet his lawyer. His previous arrest, changing charges and acquittal indicate that he might be facing malicious charges because of his views“, added Anthony Bellanger, IFJ General Secretary.

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