

Radio Free Iraq



Fast Facts

- Language: Arabic
- Coverage: 17 hours a day
- Established: 1998
- Distribution: Radio (FM, MW, Satellite), Internet (www.iraqhurr.org)
- Locations: Prague headquarters, Baghdad
- Staff: 12 in Prague, 31 stringers in Baghdad and major Iraqi cities

Media Environment

- Freedom House Freedom of the Press Index, 2009: **Not Free** (148th/195)
- Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index, 2009: 145th/175

Media in Iraq has blossomed since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003. The few state-controlled publications under the Saddam regime have been replaced by hundreds of privately owned media outlets, many of them linked to various political, ethnic, or religious groups. However, security concerns have become the primary limitation on industry growth. Countless journalists and media workers have perished in the sectarian violence that continues to wrack the country. Two of Radio Free Iraq's journalists were killed on the job in 2007. Apart from these major concerns, basic services such as electricity are also not yet completely reliable, further hampering media in the country.

Highlights

- On several notable occasions, Radio Free Iraq (RFI) has been ahead of local media in reporting events (for example, the visit of the Al-Anbar Awakening Council delegation to the United States) or covered stories on topics such as human rights abuses and corruption that the local media tried to avoid.
- RFI has a unique format with a large amount of serious content, compared to the entertainment offerings of its competitors. RFI's audience has indicated that this is a strong, positive feature of the radio. In addition, the music RFI does play is almost exclusively classical Iraqi music and songs, in contrast to the contemporary, pan-Arab fare of competing stations. Top-ranking Iraqi politicians and officials are interviewed by RFI almost on a daily basis about the most important issues of the Iraqi situation.
- RFI Director Sergei Danilochkin: "The primary goal [is] to keep delivering objective, balanced, unbiased information. In Iraq, there are so many different shades of opinion, opinions are so intolerant of one another, and there are so many news organizations that belong to political groups and deliver predominantly these groups' political agenda. It is very rare to see something that is not involved in this, that is above it, that cares to bring to the listeners as much information as possible without trying to bend this listener to one side or the other...the idea is that we are trying to present as many points of view as we can, and put them in a civilized debate."