
MOSUL BATTLE: MINE BLAST KILLS FRENCH AND IRAQI JOURNALISTS

-

21.06.2017

BBC, 20 June 2017

A French journalist and an Iraqi journalist have been killed by a mine explosion in the Iraqi city of Mosul.

Stephan Villeneuve, a video journalist, and Bakhtiyar Haddad, his fixer, were reporting on an advance by Iraqi forces against Islamic State militants.

Two other French journalists were injured, one of them seriously, by the blast in the Ras al-Jadah district west of the Old City on Monday.

Iraq is one of the world's deadliest countries for journalists.

A total of 27 professional and non-professional journalists have now been killed in Iraq since the start of 2014, according to Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

Four have died since Iraqi pro-government forces launched an offensive to recapture Mosul - the last major IS urban stronghold in the country - last October.

Despair and death as civilians flee

The battle so far

Villeneuve and Haddad had been on assignment in Mosul for the France 2 TV channel's current affairs programme, *Envoyé Spécial*, along with another French video journalist, Véronique Robert.

They had been accompanying Iraqi army forces pushing into IS-held areas of the Old City when the mine exploded beside them.

Haddad was killed by the blast, while Villeneuve and Robert were seriously wounded and were taken to a US military hospital in Qayyara, south of Mosul.

Villeneuve subsequently succumbed to his wounds, France Télévisions said early on Tuesday.

"The management and staff at France Télévisions sympathise with the pain of his partner Sophie, his four children, his family and all those he was close to. They offer their most sincere condolences," the head of the news department said.

Villeneuve had covered numerous conflicts across the world.

Samuel Forey, a French freelance journalist who was with them, was slightly injured by the same

explosion and was evacuated to Baghdad. He had been covering the battle for various media including Le Figaro, Télérama and Inrocks.

RSF said Haddad, a Kurdish journalist and fixer from Irbil, had worked for many French media outlets and had received treatment in France last year for a hand injury caused by a sniper round while reporting in the western Iraqi city of Falluja.

"War is obviously dangerous but every death or injury is a victim too many. No-one should have to pay such a high price just for reporting the news," RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire said.

IS militants in Mosul are also detaining 10 Iraqi journalists and media workers who they have held for almost two years.

The jihadists seized all of the media outlets in Mosul in 2014, when they seized large parts of Iraq and proclaimed the creation of a "caliphate".

Kaynak/Source: