

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

JASSIM AL-ASADI

جاسم الأسدي

At liberty **Iraq**

Jassim Al-Asadi, Iraq's leading expert on the southern marshlands, was kidnapped near Baghdad by an unknown armed group, tortured for fifteen days, and released without his captors being identified or held accountable.

HuMENA.

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Case reference HM-IQ-2026-006

01

THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Jassim Al-Asadi, Iraq's leading expert on the southern marshlands, was kidnapped near Baghdad by an unknown armed group, tortured for fifteen days, and released without his captors being identified or held accountable.

STATUS	**At liberty**
ARRESTED	**1 Feb 2023**
COUNTRY	**Iraq**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Drop any charges that remain on record against Jassim Al-Asadi in connection with peaceful human rights work.

02 Confirm publicly that Jassim Al-Asadi faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case.

03 Guarantee that Jassim Al-Asadi can resume that work without surveillance, summons, or further reprisal.

04 Provide effective remedy for the period of deprivation of liberty already served.

Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/jassim-al-asadi/

02

DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Physical assault	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 7, 9
Threats and intimidation	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Torture	Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7

03

HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

1 February 2023

ABDUCTION

Kidnapped by armed group near Baghdad

Armed men in plain clothes stopped Al-Asadi on the Hillah to Baghdad road, about six kilometres south of Baghdad, handcuffed him and forced him into a vehicle. His cousin, who was travelling with him, was left at the roadside. His family reported the abduction to a National Security office in Baghdad.

15 February 2023

RELEASE

Released after about two weeks in captivity

Al-Asadi was released on 15 or 16 February 2023 (sources differ). Human Rights Watch said the government appeared to have intervened, but no information was given about the kidnappers and no one has been held accountable.

04

THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Jassim Al-Asadi is an environmental scientist and academic with specialized expertise in water resources and wetland ecology. He is the co-founder and director of Nature Iraq, an Iraqi non-governmental organization dedicated to protecting, restoring, and preserving the country's natural environment. The organization has been particularly vocal about the deteriorating condition of Iraq's marshlands, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that has suffered from upstream dam construction, drought, and deliberate drainage policies over decades.

Al-Asadi is recognized as one of the few independent specialists on environmental issues in Iraq. His work has included advising government ministries on water management, campaigning against the proposed Makhoul Dam project that threatens to displace thousands of families and destroy over 183 archaeological sites, and supporting communities that depend on the marshes for their livelihoods. In early 2023 he was assisting Iraq's newly appointed Minister of Water Resources with planning irrigation for agricultural lands during a period of acute water scarcity.

The Kidnapping

On the morning of 1 February 2023, Al-Asadi was traveling on the Hillah to Baghdad highway with his cousin when two vehicles stopped them. Armed men in plain clothes handcuffed Al-Asadi, forced him into one of the vehicles, and drove away. His cousin was left at the roadside about six kilometres south of the capital. The family reported the incident to Iraqi security forces immediately, stating their belief that the abduction was linked to his environmental advocacy. Police announced they would search for him, but no updates were provided during his captivity.

Al-Asadi had been en route to Baghdad for meetings with government officials and was scheduled to meet the Minister of Water Resources the following day. At the time of the kidnapping he was leading a major campaign to protect the southern marshlands and was working closely with the ministry on water policy.

Detention Conditions and Torture

Al-Asadi was held for fifteen days. He was moved between multiple locations during his captivity. After his release he reported being subjected to what he described as the most severe forms of torture, including electric shocks and beatings with sticks. He stated that the abuse was both physical and psychological, intended to intimidate him and force him to abandon his environmental work, particularly his advocacy for the protection of the marshes.

Release and Lack of Accountability

Al-Asadi was released on 15 or 16 February 2023 (sources differ). Iraqi authorities claimed to have intervened to secure his release, but did not disclose the identity of the kidnappers or provide any details about the circumstances of his detention. No investigation has been announced, and no accountability efforts have been reported. The perpetrators remain unidentified and at large.

Al-Asadi publicly attributed the kidnapping to efforts to silence his environmental advocacy. His case is part of a broader pattern of violence against environmental defenders in Iraq, where state-backed armed groups and security officials have been implicated in extrajudicial punishment of activists. The Iraqi authorities have increasingly used judicial harassment alongside extrajudicial violence to suppress defenders, with numerous ongoing prosecutions aimed at deterring environmental advocacy.

Context and Threats to Environmental Defenders

Retaliation against environmental human rights defenders in Iraq has escalated in recent years. Armed groups with ties to the state operate with impunity, and judicial mechanisms are used as instruments of repression rather than accountability. Defenders working on water rights, land use, and pollution have faced arrest, prosecution on spurious charges, and physical violence. The absence of investigations or prosecutions in cases of abduction and torture creates an environment in which intimidation becomes routine and defenders are left without recourse or protection.

05

SAMPLE LETTER

Copy it, adapt it and send it from your own address.

Your Excellency,

I am writing about the case of Jassim Al-Asadi, environmental scientist, academic, and wetland specialist; co-founder and director of Nature Iraq, working to protect and restore the marshlands of Southern Iraq in Iraq, who has been released. I am writing to ask that the case be closed properly and that no further reprisal follows.

In brief: Jassim Al-Asadi, Iraq's leading expert on the southern marshlands, was kidnapped near Baghdad by an unknown armed group, tortured for fifteen days, and released without his captors being identified or held accountable.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Drop any charges that remain on record against Jassim Al-Asadi in connection with peaceful human rights work;
2. Confirm publicly that Jassim Al-Asadi faces no residual travel, financial, or professional restriction arising from this case;
3. Guarantee that Jassim Al-Asadi can resume that work without surveillance, summons, or further reprisal;
4. Provide effective remedy for the period of deprivation of liberty already served.

I will continue to follow this case until the record against Jassim Al-Asadi is cleared and no reprisal remains.

Respectfully,

[Your name]
[Your city, country]
8 November 2026