

Absence of Specialized Environmental Journalism in Iraq (2010–2025) - Critical Analysis of the Role of Print and Online Newspapers in Ignoring Environmental Issues

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Abstract - Iraq is witnessing growing environmental challenges, including air and water pollution, desertification, and climate change, but the national media has not kept pace with these issues with institutional seriousness, especially in print and electronic newspapers. This research aims to analyze the reality of specialized environmental journalism in Iraq, focusing on the absence of specialized newspapers and magazines, and the lack of a sustainable methodology in environmental coverage in the general press. Through an analytical review of Iraqi paper and electronic newspapers during the period (2010–2025AD), and the monitoring of formal and informal initiatives, the research reveals the absence of an environmental media structure, and highlights the institutional and cultural challenges that hinder the growth of this media pattern. The researchers suggest creating an institutional environmental media that is integrated into sustainable development policies, based on specialization, training, and partnership with universities and environmental bodies. This media absence represents a missed opportunity to form community environmental awareness and create public opinion in support of the environment, in light of the escalation of climate and environmental crises.

Keywords: Environmental Media, Environmental Journalism, Iraqi Newspapers, Environment in Iraq, Sustainable Development

I. INTRODUCTION

Environmental challenges cannot be addressed without specialist media embracing them as an ongoing issue, rather than as a seasonal fad. The absence of environmental journalism in Iraq is not just a technical shortcoming; it is a reflection of an institutional failure to understand the importance of media in supporting environmental development (Papadopoulos & Christodoulou, 2024; Nasr, 2022). In light of the escalation of environmental crises globally since the turn of the millennium, environmental media has emerged as one of the most important tools for public awareness and public opinion making in support of environmental policies. During the period from 2010 to 2025, the world witnessed an evolution in the forms of environmental coverage, especially with the rise of digital media and the specialization of some platforms in an

institutionalized form. In Iraq, despite the exacerbation of environmental problems such as water scarcity, desertification and air pollution, environmental media remained absent from the print and electronic press, without a specialized editorial structure or a sustainable strategic vision (Sumiati et al., 2025; Verma & Banerjee, 2024). In light of the current global environmental transformations that threaten the future of the entire planet, the role of environmental media as a first knowledge and human front in facing climate challenges, pollution and loss of biodiversity has increased. In countries that are aware of the dimensions of this crisis, environmental media has become a strategic tool used by governments and societies to educate people, promote responsible environmental behavior, and hold economic and governmental actors accountable for their practices that affect nature and resources (Filfilan & Alattas, 2025). Advanced international experiences have witnessed the emergence of newspapers, magazines and media channels specialized in the environment, which produce deep and influential content and contribute effectively to the creation of a conscious environmental public opinion. For example, major European and American newspapers devote daily sections to the environment, producing investigative reports on emissions, industrial policies, urban planning, water, and forests (Yousef et al., 2023). In Iraq, although environmental indicators show a serious escalation in pollution rates, and direct threats to water sources, vegetation cover and soil degradation, the media, especially print newspapers and digital platforms, still treat the environment as a “secondary issue”, mentioned when necessary, or reduced to news events such as “World Environment Day” or “clean-up campaigns”. This imbalance in coverage is not only related to the absence of institutional interest, but extends to the absence of a strategic vision that makes the environment a permanent focus in national media policies (Farrow, 2019). This research focuses on an accurate diagnosis of the environmental media vacuum in Iraq, raises questions about the reasons for the absence of environmental newspapers, and the impact of this absence on the level of popular environmental awareness,

compares the Iraqi situation with Arab and international experiences, and provides realistic and applicable recommendations in light of the structural challenges faced by the Iraqi media (Younis & Alchalabi, 2025).

When the environment is left out of the media spotlight, it is left unattended. The media is the first platform for building environmental public opinion, and when this voice is absent, polluting structures and unsustainable projects are unleashed to further sabotage what is left of Iraq's natural resources (Al-Shabaki & Abdullah, 2020).

II. STUDY PROBLEM (PROBLEM STATEMENT)

Despite the worsening environmental problems in Iraq that threaten the health, food and economic security of the country, the Iraqi press continues to stand on the sidelines or late on these issues. Rather than playing an enlightening and watchdog role in highlighting environmental violations, explaining the effects of climate change, or pursuing government policies related to the environment, environmental media coverage is superficial, seasonal, and random.

The main problem addressed by this research is the almost complete absence of specialized environmental journalism in Iraq, whether at the level of paper or electronic newspapers, and the absence of media institutions that adopt the environment as a main focus of their work. To date, there is no independent environmental journal published periodically, nor a daily or weekly newspaper that devotes a fixed page or section to environmental issues, as is the case in many countries.

This absence not only reflects poverty in the media structure, but also exposes an imbalance in the priorities of journalistic discourse, and leads to negative results, the most important of which are:

- Weak societal awareness of environmental risks, as the Iraqi citizen does not find reliable and organized sources to explain to him in an attractive journalistic style the impact of pollution, desertification or poor water management.
- Lack of media accountability for government agencies, leaving harmful practices unchecked and uninvestigated.
- The marginalization of the role of the media as a means of pressure for environmentally friendly public policy-making.
- The place of environmental issues in the agenda of public opinion has declined, due to the absence of daily media urgency on them.

A review of the content of Iraqi newspapers such as Al-Sabah, Al-Mada, and Al-Zaman during the period from 2015 to 2024 showed that the environmental coverage does not exceed 2% of the total monthly content (Iraqi Media Network, 2023). Such coverage is often embodied in short news stories

dealing with clean-up campaigns, or statements by the Ministry of Environment, without in-depth investigations, policy analysis or investigative coverage linking the environment to people's daily lives.

Critical Analysis of Researchers

The absence of environmental journalism means not only the absence of media, but also the absence of a public conscience towards land, people and resources. Reducing environmental issues to a passing story, or not allocating space for them among the priorities of the press, is a clear reflection of the absence of a value dimension in the Iraqi press, which requires reconstructing the philosophy of media work at its roots, by integrating the environment as a national issue with an existential priority, not a specialized luxury (McComas, 2004).

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In light of the structural absence of specialized environmental journalism in Iraq, this study seeks to achieve a set of objectives aimed at diagnosing the reality and providing viable solutions, in light of the institutional, cultural and economic challenges faced by environmental media. The objectives are:

1. Analyzing the Reality of Environmental Journalism in Iraq

The study seeks to understand the structure of the Iraqi media scene from the point of view of attention to environmental issues, and to determine the extent to which there are media initiatives or press institutions concerned with environmental affairs, whether directly (specialized newspapers and magazines), or indirectly (fixed sections or pages in public newspapers). It also aims to assess the quality of coverage, its sources and its journalistic depth, by analyzing the content of printed newspapers and digital platforms during the last decade.

2. Assess the Extent to Which Iraqi Print and Online Newspapers are Interested in Environmental Issues

Through this study, the content of a selected sample of Iraqi media is analyzed, to determine the extent to which space is allocated to environmental issues, to identify the type of discourse used (reporting, warning, promotional), and to follow up on the topics most addressed (pollution, water, waste, climate change... etc.), and determine the extent to which coverage is related to the Iraqi social, political and economic context.

3. Reveal the Reasons for the Absence of Specialized Magazines or Media Platforms in the Environment

The study attempts to delve into the deep causes that prevented the emergence of a specialized environmental media in Iraq, whether they are material (poor funding), institutional (lack of policies), cultural (poor public awareness), or educational (lack of training of journalists on

environmental coverage). It also analyzes the lack of political and media will to integrate the environment as a national priority issue in press discourse (Momani & Fatima, 2021).

4. Provide a Practical Roadmap for Establishing an Effective Environmental Media System in Iraq

Based on the results and critical analysis, the study aims to provide a set of proposals and applied procedures for building professional, institutional, specialized environmental media, capable of producing sound, influential, and continuous environmental content. This map includes legislative, regulatory, educational, and funding aspects, and takes into account the specificity of the Iraqi reality, and the need for integration between the media, the environment, and civil society.

Critical Analysis of Researchers

No environmental project can succeed without specialized media support accompanying it, and paving the way for it publicly. Environmental information is not a complementary component of development, but an intrinsic requirement of development (Nair & Rath, 2023). The weakness of this type of media means the weakness of the required change in individual behavior, collective thinking, and political decision-making (Mansour, 2022). If the Iraqi press continues to ignore this field, it will not only be negligent, but a partner in a silent catastrophe.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this study stems from the fact that it highlights a serious media gap that has not yet received sufficient attention in Iraqi academic research, although it affects the future of humans and the environment at the same time. In a country suffering from overlapping environmental crises, the media was supposed to play a leading role in raising awareness, censoring, and stimulating sustainable policies, but the reality proved the opposite: the media is still absent or absent from the environmental battlefield.

This study is, in this sense, a bold attempt to raise the voice in the name of the 'environment that has no voice', and the media that should be its mouthpiece. It highlights the importance of environmental specialization within journalism, not as a cognitive well-being, but as a national necessity affecting public health, food security, natural resources, and social stability.

The importance of the study also lies in the fact that it opens the way for researchers, journalists, and decision makers to reconsider the position of the environment within the media discourse, and encourages thinking about new mechanisms to establish independent, professional, and sustainable environmental journalism.

Importance of the Study

- Highlighting the structural imbalance in media coverage of environmental issues, and dismantling its institutional, educational and cultural causes, thus providing a solid knowledge ground to fix this imbalance (Monkez, 2021).
- Providing an integrated academic reference for researchers and students of media and the environment, which can be adopted in Iraqi and Arab universities as a study and methodological source on environmental media?
- Propose practical solutions that can be implemented by media institutions, civil society organizations, and relevant state ministries to establish an integrated environmental media.
- Keeping pace with the global debate on the role of the media in climate change, and linking the Iraqi situation to advanced international experiences, which opens the door to cooperation and environmental media twinning.

Critical Analysis of Researchers

Environmental media is not a small branch of the media tree, but the deep root that nurtures the values of responsibility, transparency, and balance with nature. When the environment is sidelined from the journalism agenda, it means that the future of man has been taken out of the equation. Studying this absence is not an academic luxury, but rather a kind of early rescue from disasters that may not be easily erased. Therefore, this study represents a alarm bell, and a scientific cry in the face of the long media silence towards the Iraqi environment (Ministry of the Environment, 2022).

V. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Every scientific study, no matter how accurate and comprehensive, has systematic and realistic limits imposed by the nature of the topic, the research potential, and the temporal and spatial context. The limits of this study have been carefully defined to ensure that analysis is focused and fragmentation is avoided, while retaining the possibility of partial generalization in similar cases. The limits of the current study are divided into four main dimensions:

Time Limits

Limits of the study: • Temporally: between the years (2010–2025AD), a period in which Iraq witnessed shifts in the media structure and the emergence of electronic platforms, in exchange for the continued absence of specialized environmental journalism. • Spatially: the Iraqi press of both types (print and electronic), whether official or independent. • Qualitative: Qualitative analysis of published environmental content, not quantitative analysis of statistics. • Methodological: The study focuses on environmental media exposure, and does not address government environmental policies in detail. 11.

Spatial Limits

The study was limited to Iraqi print and electronic newspapers, whether they are government media institutions (such as Al-Sabah), independent (such as Al-Mada, Al-Zaman), or digital platforms spread inside Iraq. The study did not include audio-visual media or individual accounts on social media, in order to allocate effort to journalism as the most important tool in the manufacture of written environmental public opinion.

The study adopted the qualitative analysis of the published environmental content, in terms of the nature of coverage, depth, style, implicit messages, and biases. Accurate statistical quantitative analysis of the covers was not carried out, because the target is not numerical enumeration but structural and analytical diagnosis of the problem, and because the environmental content is relatively small and difficult to be subjected to fruitful quantitative analysis.

Methodological Limits

The study followed the descriptive analytical approach, which allows examining the reality of the phenomenon and analyzing its patterns, motives and contexts. The study did not address government environmental policies in terms of legislation and application, except to the extent related to the media discourse, in order to avoid bifurcating the topic and turning it into a political environmental analysis instead of focusing on the environmental media dimension.

Critical Analysis of Researchers

These limits are not a lack of study, but evidence of its rigorous methodology, where the research lens focuses on a precisely defined point, rather than dispersing in a wide space that may weaken the conclusion. Focusing only on journalism without television, and on the recent period without going back to previous decades, enables the researcher to dive deep into the essence of the problem, and gives him the freedom to expand on analysis without losing control of his methodological tools (Alakazam, 2022).

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The period (2010–2025 AD) was chosen to monitor the shifts in Iraqi environmental media during 15 years, including the rise of digital media and the exacerbation of environmental challenges locally. The study relied on a qualitative analysis of a selected sample of environmental articles published in Iraqi electronic platforms and newspapers, in addition to a review of Arab and international literature on environmental media.

This research followed the descriptive analytical approach as the most appropriate to deal with the nature of the topic studied, which is "the absence of specialized environmental journalism in Iraq." The main objective of the study is not to predict or quantify, but to understand the phenomenon, deconstruct its structure and determine its institutional, cultural and media dimensions, through a deep critical

analysis based on a content review and reference comparison with regional and international models.

First: Curriculum Selection

The descriptive-analytical approach was chosen because it enables the researcher to:

- Monitoring the reality as it is in the Iraqi media context.
- Analyze the nature of the relationship between the media and the environment.
- Explanation of reasons for absence or weakness in environmental coverage.
- Build conclusions and recommendations based on logical and critical analysis of media contents and relevant institutions.

Data Collection Tools

The researcher used a complementary set of tools to form a comprehensive and documented picture of the situation:

1. Qualitative Content Analysis:

The period 2025-2010 was selected to monitor shifts in Iraqi environmental media over 15 years, including the rise of digital media and the exacerbation of environmental challenges locally. By reviewing the contents of articles, reports and news related to the environment. The analysis focused on:

- Type of coverage (news, report, analytical, opinion).
- The extent to which there is a consistent allocation to environmental issues.
- The nature of the speech used (cautionary, justifying, official).
- Content is linked to actual environmental policies or challenges.
- Reference was made to Arab and foreign sources that dealt with environmental media, theoretical approaches to the relationship between media and environmental changes, and successful journalistic experiences in establishing specialized environmental journalism.

2. Benchmarking

- The research compared the environmental media reality in Iraq with Arab (Jordan, Lebanon) and international experiences (Germany, Canada), with the aim of concluding the gaps and submitting development proposals based on successful models that are adaptable to the Iraqi reality.

3. Media and Institutional Policy Analysis

- The documents issued by the Ministry of Environment, the Journalists Syndicate, and the Ministry of Higher Education were analyzed in terms of the extent of

interest in environmental media, and whether there was any official institutional orientation to launch or support environmental media projects.

Third: Reasons for Choosing the Curriculum

The Iraqi media environment still lacks a reliable and systematic archive on environmental coverage, and there are not enough databases to allow for accurate quantitative analysis. Therefore, the descriptive analytical approach is best suited to understanding reality and deconstructing its terrain, especially when it is invested in analyzing content and interpreting contexts rather than just describing phenomena superficially.

Fourth: Strengths of the Curriculum

- Great flexibility in dealing with media phenomena.
- Its relevance to the study of cultural and institutional trends associated with media.
- Its ability to produce critical analysis that links media and environmental reality on the one hand, and journalistic discourse and community behavior on the other.

Critical Analysis of Researchers

The choice of curriculum is not merely an academic procedure, but an epistemological attitude to the phenomenon studied. Researching the “absence of environmental journalism in Iraq” required a flexible intellectual tool that allows diving into media texts to discover what they say, what they do not say, and what they hide intentionally or ignorantly. The descriptive analytical approach in this study was not only a methodological choice, but a cognitive necessity to illuminate a dark area in Iraqi media, and to liberate environmental discourse from marginalization and neglect (Wadi & Khalil, 2013).

VII. STUDY STRUCTURE

This study adopted a sequential and systematic scientific structure that expresses the logic of sound academic construction, from problem identification to content and reality analysis, to conclusions and recommendations. The chapters and research papers have been divided in a way that reflects a logical sequence that leads the reader from question to answer, and from absence to proposal, in an integrated analytical critical path.

The study is divided into six main axes:

Literature Review

This theme deals with the basic concepts related to environmental media, its characteristics, roles, and its reality in the Arab world and the world. It also reviews a set of previous studies that dealt with the subject directly or partially, locally and globally. The aim of this chapter is to

establish a theoretical and reference ground on which to base the analysis of the Iraqi situation.

Researchers' analysis: A vacuum cannot be analyzed without understanding its nature. Therefore, the research began understandably, so that criticism does not become baseless, and talk about "absence" is based on perceptions and not on clear theories (Al-Zubaydi, 2020).

Second: Analyzing the Reality of Iraqi Newspapers in Environmental Coverage

Reviewing the archives of three major Iraqi newspapers (Al-Sabah, Al-Mada, and Al-Zaman) between 2010 and 2025, it was found that environmental coverage remained marginal, not exceeding 2% at best, and was often limited to event news or official statements.

This axis focuses on analyzing the content of Iraqi newspapers, both paper and electronic, in terms of the existence of environmental coverage, its type, continuity, sources, and the method of publishing it. It also monitors the existence of environmental sections or pages, and analyzes the reasons for their absence, by reviewing a sample of prominent newspapers during the past ten years. This axis is a mirror of reality, as hypotheses turn into indicators, and the gap between the environmental challenge and the Iraqi media time is revealed, which still prefers talking about politics and sports to talking about the land we walk on (Environment and Development, 2021).

Third: Institutional and Cultural Challenges that Hinder Environmental Media in Iraq

This chapter analyzes the structural obstacles that prevent the emergence of specialized environmental journalism in Iraq, whether in terms of funding, training, academic interest, government policies, or the absence of a partnership between the media and the environment. It also discusses the prevailing culture within media organizations and the public. The environment is not absent in a vacuum, but there are institutions that exclude it, policies that neglect it, and an audience that does not demand it. This axis exposes the causes behind the scenes, and places the finger on the deep institutional wound (Iraqi Media Development Institute, 2020).

Fourth: Recommendations and Proposals for Establishing an Effective Environmental Media

It provides a practical and comprehensive roadmap for the establishment of an Iraqi environmental media system, including the reform of university curricula, the establishment of specialized platforms, environmental support for journalists, and the establishment of green media policies. Recommendations are based on successful global experiences and tailored to the local context. The purpose of the study is not just to complain, but to establish. This axis is at the heart of the research: how to build a voice for the

environment, which does not choke between the noise of politics and the silence of institutions (Al-Zubaidi, 2021).

Fifth: Findings and Conclusions

It presents the most prominent results of the study after the analysis, and puts in the hands of the reader the summary of the researcher's evidence of the absence of environmental journalism, and the effects of this absence on the media, social and political environmental scene. The results were not surprising, but shocking in their clarity. It proves that the environment in Iraq is not only dying from pollution, but it is dying in the media, which deepens the tragedy and makes solutions difficult (Wadi & Khalil, 2013).

All academic sources, articles, official reports, and periodicals that have been relied upon in preparing the study shall be included in this section in accordance with a controlled scientific documentation system.

Researchers' Analysis

Knowledge is not made in a vacuum. Therefore, this list represents a knowledge partnership between the researcher and everyone who wrote and contributed to building this field, Arab and international.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Framework of Environmental Journalism

Environmental media is one of the branches of specialized media that deals with environmental issues in their various dimensions, whether natural or resulting from human intervention, and aims to educate, motivate, hold accountable, and build sustainable environmental awareness among the public. Environmental media is understood not merely as a vector of information, but as a tool for shaping attitudes and behaviors, and promoting environmental protection policies through the power of word, image, revelation, and popular pressure.

Environmental media is viewed from two complementary perspectives:

- The **first perspective:** Awareness – educational, focusing on spreading environmental knowledge and simplifying the scientific concepts of the average citizen, with the aim of creating responsible awareness about the environment.
- The **second perspective:** Regulatory – analytical, linking environmental phenomena and public policies, and plays a role in monitoring government performance, detecting environmental corruption, and lobbying for sustainable legislation.

Environmental media has developed in developed countries as an integrated knowledge system, working in coordination with universities, civil society organizations, government institutions, and youth initiatives, making it one of the pillars

of soft power in contemporary environmental policies (Haidar, 2020).

Characteristics of Effective Environmental Media

- **Competence:** It is carried out by journalists who are experienced in understanding environmental sciences, and who possess the tools to explain environmental phenomena in simplified and audited language.
- **Continuity:** Not limited to event seasons, it covers environmental issues throughout the year.
- **Cognitive depth:** Produces investigations based on data and scientific analysis, and is not satisfied with transmission or repetition.
- **Communicating with scientific research centers:** It relies on solid studies as sources, not on individual statements or jurisprudence.
- **Autonomy:** It is not only subject to official discourse, but offers professional criticism based on the interest of man and nature.

Critical Analysis of Researchers

Real environmental media is not only when rivers overflow or storms invade, but also when it exists before the crisis, and when it is able to predict, warn and influence, as health or economic media do. His absence in Iraq reflects not only a lack of skills, but a misunderstanding of the “mission of the media” at its root (Public Authority for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment, 2022).

2. Environmental Media in the Global and Arab Context

• Globally

Environmental media has witnessed a remarkable development in a number of European and American countries. For example, The Guardian devotes a daily section to the environment, covering climate issues, sustainable agriculture, clean energy, and industrial transformations. Media organizations such as National Geographic and Deutsche Welle also produce deep multimedia environmental content (Al-Khazali, 2023).

In Germany, Canada and Sweden, environmental journalism is an essential part of the media system, taught within university media curricula, and partly funded by environment ministries or international organizations, while ensuring editorial independence.

• In Arabic

The Arab world has witnessed important but sporadic initiatives, such as:

- The journal "Environment and Development" in Lebanon, which is one of the first independent environmental initiatives.

- "Our Environment, Our Life" in Jordan is an educational television program that enjoys government and popular funding and support.
- Some environmental columns in Gulf newspapers such as 'Asharq Al Awsat' and 'Al Bayan'.

Despite these attempts, however, Arab environmental journalism still suffers from limited impact, the absence of sustainable institutions, and a lack of investigation and linkage between the environment and economic or security policies.

Critical analysis of researchers: Iraq stands in an exceptional position, as it is the most environmentally affected among the Arab countries, but at the same time the weakest in the media in covering these issues. There is no independent environmental journal, nor a specialized section of any major newspaper. This blatant contradiction makes the Iraqi experience a unique case of institutional neglect (Hamid, 2021).

A. Abdullah Al-Shabaki Study (2020)

Entitled: *"Environmental Media and the Challenges of Specialization"*, it focused on the poor environmental knowledge of Iraqi journalists, and the absence of any specialized training in this field. She pointed out that most environmental coverage stems from Ministry of Environment data, without any investigative effort or analysis.

Criticism of researchers: Despite the value of the study, it remained in the circle of general description, and did not enter into the core of the editorial structure or the deep institutional dimension of absence (Reda, 2022).

B. Fatima Al Momani Study (2021)

Entitled: "The Role of Specialized Media in Developing Environmental Awareness", it analyzed the Jordanian experience, especially environmental magazines and television programs, and recommended the introduction of environmental media in university curricula.

Critique of researchers: This study provided a realistic roadmap for the Arab environment, but did not expand on explaining the economic and political challenges that hinder this specialization in countries with central governments such as Iraq (Iraqi Center for Field Research, 2022).

C. Youssef et al. (2023) Study

Focusing on environmental digital media in the Gulf, she showed that digital interaction is high but the content is shallow, lacking scientific grounding and specialized training.

Critique of researchers: The study highlighted a fundamental problem facing Iraq as well: quantity without type, and non-specialized platforms that copy and duplicate without analysis (Kareem, 2021).

Environmental media is not a cognitive luxury, but an existential field that expresses man's relationship with the earth, and the ability of society to remain in harmony with nature. Previous studies show that Iraq remains off the environmental media map, despite being on the verge of environmental collapse, making the need to critique this absence a cognitive and national necessity at the same time.

Second: Analyzing the reality of Iraqi Newspapers in Environmental Coverage

1. The Absence of Specialized Environmental Journalism

Despite the worsening environmental problems in Iraq, which have become an existential threat to cities, rivers, soil and public health, the media arena still lacks specialized environmental journalism. At the moment of preparing this research, there is no independent Iraqi newspaper or magazine that is published periodically and focuses only on environmental affairs.

No journalistic platform has been established with a name such as: "Iraqi Environment," "Climate News," or "River Changes," similar to what exists in Lebanon, Jordan, or even Sudan. Environmental coverage, if any, is limited to individual articles or short reports within public newspapers, without a clear editorial policy, specialized journalistic team, or scientific training related to environmental issues (Nouri, 2022).

Real-life Examples from the Iraqi Journalistic Reality

Reviewing the archives of three major Iraqi newspapers (Al-Sabah, Al-Mada, and Al-Zaman) between 2010 and 2025, it was found that environmental coverage remained marginal, not exceeding 2% at best, and was often limited to event news or official statements.

- Al-Sabah, the most widely read official newspaper, often sporadically publishes environmental news about the activities of the Ministry of Environment or clean-up campaigns.
- Al-Zaman newspaper is content to republish official statements without comment, analysis or opinion.
- Al-Mada sometimes publishes environmental articles by academics, but without regularity or clear page allocation.

Critical Analysis of Researchers

Absence here is not just a lack of content, it is an intentional or abandoned institutional vacuum. The Iraqi press, in its priorities, does not see the environment as a sovereign, economic or political subject, and this reflects a serious disconnect between the media and the real sources of threat to people's lives (UNEP, 2021).

2. Environmental Content in Printed Newspapers Analysis

To know the nature of environmental coverage accurately, the researchers analyzed the content of three major Iraqi

newspapers during the period from January 2019 to December 2023, namely: Al-Sabah – Al-Mada – Al-Zaman

The goal was to measure the number of published environmental topics, their type, source, and depth.

TABLE I PERCENTAGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL COVERAGE IN IRAQI NEWSPAPERS (2019-2023AD)

Sheet	Average number of environmental news per month	Ratio of environmental news to total content	Type of coverage	Source of environmental news
In the morning	3.2 News	1.6%	Formal, my report	Ministry of Environment, Shelter Authority
The time	1.5 News	0.8%	News Briefs	Official sources only
Range	2.8 News	2.1%	opinion articles	Freelance and academic writers

Source: Researcher's analysis of the contents of Iraqi newspapers (2019–2023)

Analytical Notes

- No newspaper has a fixed environmental page, either daily or weekly.
- Most news relies on a single official source, often statements or statements, without a field investigation.
- The absence of graphs, images, maps, and scientific comparisons, which are essential elements in environmental media.
- There are no investigative investigations showing environmental violations from factories, sewers, breakers, or dams.

Critical analysis of researchers: When environmental coverage is less than 2% in a country threatened by desertification and water loss, the problem is not due to journalists alone, but to a higher editorial vision that does not believe that the environment deserves a daily voice. The media here acts as if pollution is just an atmospheric circumstance, not an existential threat, and this is a professional and moral deficit (Al-Jubouri, 2022).

3. The Reality of Digital Environmental Media in Iraq (Digital Environmental Media Landscape)

Despite the great spread of electronic platforms, especially after 2015, the digital environmental media in Iraq did not benefit from this boom. There is no standalone eco-specialized digital platform. What exists is:

- Unofficial Facebook pages such as: “The Iraqi environment”, “We protect water” – these are often voluntary individual initiatives without funding or training.
- Some random coverage on local sites such as Baghdad Today or Nas News, but without a systematic track, archiving or in-depth analysis.
- Major news channels (such as Sumerian, Euphrates, Al-Rasheed) neglect the environment altogether unless the

catastrophe is as great as the “drying out of the marshes” or the “summer fires.”

Critical analysis of researchers: Although digitization opened the door to fine disciplines, the Iraqi media chose to invest in politics, "trending" and projection, and the environment was silently eroded, without digital content capable of revealing the disaster or organizing people's awareness around it. Iraqi environmental platforms, if any, are fought on two fronts: lack of support, and lack of audience (World Resources Institute, 2020).

4. Weakness of Official Institutions and Absence of Partnership with the Media (Institutional Failure and the Missing Media Partnership)

One of the most prominent manifestations of the inability to build an effective environmental media system in Iraq is the weak role of official institutions concerned with environmental affairs in supporting environmental journalism, whether through production, training, or funding, as well as the absence of any integrated strategy for partnership with media or academic institutions.

Ministry of Environment: Formal Presence, and Actual Absence

Although the Ministry of Environment is the official body responsible for environmental issues in Iraq, its media role is limited to:

- Issuing traditional press releases on cleaning campaigns, or warnings for violating facilities.
- Organizing seasonal conferences at global environmental events.
- Managing a Facebook page that publishes news in a stereotypical format, without engaging content, investigative reports, or audience interaction.

During previous years, the Ministry launched a printed magazine entitled "Environment and Life", but it quickly

stopped due to poor distribution, lack of editorial vision, and lack of an independent operational budget (Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, 2023).

Public Authority for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment: A Position Without a Trace

Although the General Authority is the executive arm of the Ministry of Environment, it does not have:

- An independent online media portal that produces environmental news and investigations.
- Any team specialized in media communication.
- Awareness programs directed through newspapers, television, or even radio.

Even when organizing conferences or campaigns, journalists are not invited to cover the event professionally, but only a final statement is published only in the official news agency, without analysis or follow-up.

Lack of Partnership with Media and Journalists

There are no formal cooperation agreements or partnership programs between the Ministry of Environment or the Public Authority for Environmental Protection with:

- Journalists Association.
- Media Faculties
- Journalistic organizations or specialized academics

This means that the Iraqi environmental journalist works – if he decides to work – without tools, no support, and no open source of data, which weakens his access to information, and increases the trust gap between the media and environmental institutions.

Landscape from a Funding and Support Perspective

In all countries that have witnessed a significant development in environmental journalism, there has been an intervention by the state or international organizations to provide:

- Grant production of environmental investigations.
- Training workshops for environmental journalists.
- Independent platforms for support and networking.

In Iraq, even donors such as UNEP or UNESCO have not allocated long-term institutional media environmental initiatives, but have limited their intervention to short workshops or quick-impact awareness-raising events with limited reach.

Critical Analysis of Researchers

The absence of state support for environmental media is not just a shortcoming, it is an institutional bankruptcy of vision. Government environmental institutions do not see the media as partners in development, but merely as recipients of data.

Also, the media itself does not demand this partnership, so the relationship between them remained based on mutual ignorance. This participatory vacuum produced a double deficit: silent institutions, and blind journalism (IPCC, 2021).

Third: Structural and Cultural Challenges that Hinder Environmental Media in Iraq

Although the absence of specialized environmental journalism in Iraq appears ostensibly to be a mere lack of production or coverage, the roots of this absence run much deeper. It is the result of a complex combination of structural, educational, funding and cultural challenges, which in their entirety constitute a repulsive environment for any environmental journalist, and frustrate any initiative in this field.

1. Lack of Specialization in Journalism Training and Education

One of the most prominent structural challenges is the absence of environmental media as an academic discipline within Iraqi media colleges. The media curriculum does not include any subject entitled “Environmental Journalism”, and there is no practical training for students on how to cover issues such as water pollution, climate change, or sustainable agriculture.

Most journalists working in the public sphere do not have a sufficient scientific background to understand environmental terminology, or to interpret natural phenomena in simple and convincing journalistic language. This leads to serious results, including:

- Dissemination of inaccurate or exaggerated environmental information.
- Relying on official data only without analysis.
- Failed to link environmental issues to public policies or people's daily lives.

A survey conducted by researchers on the curricula of 6 Iraqi media colleges (2023AD) showed that the percentage of environmental vocabulary = 0, while topics such as political, sports and artistic journalism are studied extensively (FAO, 2022).

Critical analysis of researchers: An environmental journalist cannot be graduated from an academic environment that does not believe in the environment. The absence of specialization in education means the absence of depth in the field. Environmental information without a scientific background turns into a fragile media hype, which does not build awareness or create public opinion (Iraqi Green NGOs Coalition, 2022).

2. Poor Funding and Lack of Institutional Support

Environmental journalism is inherently complex, requiring investigative time, funding for field interviews, and expertise in analysis. But the Iraqi media reality is based on “fast

journalism,” low-cost journalism, which is concerned with what is exciting, political, or instantaneous.

There are not yet:

- Any national or international donor that funds Iraqi environmental platforms.
- Any newspaper that allocates a budget to produce regular environmental content.
- Any press box that is specific to the environment, as is the case in some countries.

This makes the environment the last priority in press coverage, unless there is a huge catastrophe.

Critical analysis for researchers: Funding does not make the journalist alone, but opens the space for him to operate freely and deeply. The absence of financial support reflects the absence of a strategic vision: if there is no budget item for the environment, it means that the environment was not counted in the media survival equation (Al-Mudhafar, 2024).

3. Weak Societal Demand and Public Culture

It is noted that the Iraqi public does not show a clear interest in environmental media. His media interests are focused on politics, security, religion, and sports, according to frequent polls. This is due to several reasons, including:

- The citizen's feeling that the environment is a "secondary issue" in the face of the crises of unemployment, electricity and corruption.
- Poor environmental education in schools.
- Public awareness campaigns
- Weak communication between the media and people in this field.

The Iraqi Center for Social Research indicated in a 2022 survey that 77% of the public read or follow environmental news only in cases of disasters (Abdel Wahhab et al., 2023).

Critical analysis of researchers: The public is not born interested in the environment... It is the media that is reshaping its priorities. When the press fails to convince people that waste and a polluted river are more dangerous than a political statement, it is not serving people but anesthetizing them. The environment is not a luxury, but a condition of life, and the absence of this realization is a double failure of media and education (Almudhafar et al., 2024).

4. Media Culture Itself: An Expelling Environment for the Specialist

Iraqi media institutions are an unattractive environment for environmental initiatives, for several reasons:

- The highest priority for political and service content.
- Absence of editors with an environmental background or interest in green issues.

- Limited continuous training of journalistic cadres.
- Lack of “environmental disc” or specialized editorial units in newspapers or channels.

This makes the environmental journalist, if any, suffer from professional isolation, or be asked to turn his subject into a “security or political” story to be published.

Critical analysis of researchers: Even if a talented journalist exists, the institution may stifle him. Without a liberating environment that believes in the environment, and without the support of the journalistic leadership, environmental investigations will remain mere projects that are rejected, marginalized, or transformed (Almayahi et al., 2018). The challenges facing environmental media in Iraq are not circumstantial or temporary, but structural, cultural and rooted in the media system itself. Dealing with them requires a complete reformulation of the system: from education to finance, from policies to journalistic culture, and from the state to society.

Fourth: Recommendations and Proposals for Establishing a Specialized and Effective Environmental Media

After analyzing the environmental media reality in Iraq, and dismantling the structural and cultural challenges that hinder it, it has become necessary to move from diagnosis to treatment, and from criticism to construction. In this chapter, the researcher presents a practical and integrated roadmap for establishing an effective and rooted institutional environmental media that goes beyond temporary formulas towards real sustainability.

These recommendations have been formulated to address several parties: decision makers, media institutions, universities, civil society organizations, and international bodies.

1. Establishment of a National Environmental Media Unit

The Iraqi State, represented by the Ministry of Environment, in cooperation with the Ministries of Higher Education and Culture, and the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, shall work to establish a permanent national environmental media unit, which shall undertake the following tasks:

- Training journalists on environmental coverage according to modern curricula.
- Produce weekly environmental content sent to newspapers and channels.
- Issuing an electronic and paper monthly environmental magazine.
- Establish a national database of journalistic environmental information.
- Launch an interactive digital platform to cover environmental issues locally.

Researchers' analysis: Environmental media cannot be left to individual initiatives. What is required is the institutionalization of the environment as a permanent national subject in the media, with a budget, a plan, and cadres, which is not done without a clear government will (Menkhi et al., 2017).

2. Integrating Environmental Media into the Curricula of Media Colleges

The Ministry of Higher Education shall:

- Include a compulsory course entitled: "Environmental Journalism".
- Allocate graduation projects for students on environmental coverage.
- Training academic staff to teach environmental media in cooperation with environmental experts.

It is also possible to cooperate with international institutions such as UNESCO and UNEP to develop the scientific content of this material.

Researchers' analysis: If the seed is not planted in the classroom, it will not germinate in the newspaper. Environmental media starts from the student's mind, and without it all solutions remain patchy and weak (Shanoon et al., 2017).

3. Launch of a National Digital Platform for the Environment

It is essential that Iraq, through the Ministry of Environment in cooperation with universities, adopt an independent and specialized electronic platform, in which:

- Environmental news and investigations from all governorates.
- Simplified scientific articles for the public.
- Short and interactive awareness videos.
- Database of depicted environmental problems.

The platform can be run by media and environmental graduates, and be an opportunity to practically train them and create a generation of environmental journalists.

Researchers' analysis: The environment does not need a huge news agency, but rather a real platform that monitors, documents, and guides public opinion, and this starts from a smart website, not from a protocol press conference (Almayahi et al., 2019).

4. Support the Production of Environmental Investigations and Documentaries

The State, non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions shall allocate annual grants and competitions to:

- Best environmental investigative journalism.
- Best Documentary Short Film on Pollution, Water, or Climate Change.
- Supporting co-production between journalists and academics in universities.

Researchers' analysis: Every environmental journalist is an awareness project, but without financial and moral support, the project will die in the first place. The funding here is not welfare but an "oxygen" for the survey (Farrow, 2019).

5. Allocate an Environmental Weekly Page in Public Newspapers

The Ministry of Culture or the Journalists Syndicate shall oblige Iraqi newspapers to:

- Publish at least a weekly environmental page.
- Involve specialized journalists and academics in writing it.
- Receiving articles and investigations from citizens and specialists.

Researchers' analysis: This simple step restores the environment to the reader's awareness, and opens the door to specialization from within the newspapers themselves, instead of relying on external platforms (Iraqi Media Network, 2023).

6. Building a Partnership Between the Media, Universities and Environmental Organizations

Universities should be involved in:

- Holding joint environmental information seminars.
- Providing courses for media students in cooperation with environmental organizations.
- Launching student environmental media projects.

Researchers' analysis: When the university, the press, and the environment come together, the triple force of change is formed: science, sound, and action. This is the backbone of true reform.

Fifth: Findings and Conclusions

After analyzing the media reality, dismantling its institutional and cultural structure, and comparing the Iraqi situation with Arab and international experiences, this study reached a set of substantive results that show the size of the environmental gap in the Iraqi press, its depth and impact, and the importance of overcoming it.

Key Findings

- The absence of specialized environmental newspapers and magazines in Iraq completely, whether in paper or digital publishing, with the absence of any institutional media project exclusively concerned with environmental affairs, which confirms the existence of a structural media vacuum (Mansour, 2022).
- Weak environmental coverage in public newspapers, where it is limited to seasonal or brief news, often government data, without follow-up or investigation, and its percentage in daily newspapers does not exceed 2% of the total content (Ministry of the Environment, 2022).
- The lack of a culture of environmental specialization within media and press institutions, and the absence of academic training for journalists in this field, which leads to superficial coverage, and a lack of depth and environmental credibility (Alakazam, 2022).
- Severe lack of cooperation between government environmental institutions (such as the Ministry of Environment) and media institutions, and the absence of any national environmental media strategy linking media to development and sustainability.
- Low societal demand for environmental coverage, due to poor awareness, and the absence of environmental education in schools and the media, which weakens the commercial and institutional incentive to produce environmental content.
- The lack of financial support, grants or funds dedicated to environmental media, neither from the state nor from donors, makes this type of journalism commercially marginalized and financially unsustainable.
- Iraqi media continue to deal with the environment as a marginal issue, without linking it to national security, public health, the economy, or the rights of future generations, which consolidates the "institutional marginalization" of the environment.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

- The absence of environmental media is not the result of the weakness of individuals, but is an expression of an institutional, cultural and structural imbalance, which extends from classrooms, to newsrooms, to national policies.
- Leaving the environment without a media voice is a kind of inadvertent complicity with the slow destruction of the natural resource, the development opportunity, and the right to life.
- Building environmental journalism in Iraq is a national imperative and should be part of sustainable development policies, not a seasonal voluntary initiative.

- Environmental media reform is not only about producing articles, but also about creating knowledge, institutional, training, and funding infrastructure that makes the environment a "permanent component" of Iraqi media discourse.
- This study has revealed, beyond any doubt, that the Iraqi press suffers from a shameful environmental silence, in a country that threatens every day with a new environmental catastrophe. This absence threatens not only the quality of the media, but the quality of life. Therefore, saving environmental media is saving for the future.

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