



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

CHRISTOPHER WARREN
President

AIDAN WHITE
General Secretary

George W. Bush
President, United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
Tel.: +1 202-456-2461 / Email: president@whitehouse.gov

April 8th 2005

Dear Mr President,

On behalf of the International Federation of Journalists, the world's largest journalists' group, I write to express our concern over the role of the United States in the crisis of impunity over the killing of journalists and media staff in Iraq.

Today, the second anniversary of the attack by United States forces on Baghdad's Palestine Hotel, marks an event that has come to symbolise impunity over attacks on journalists and media staff in Iraq and around the world.

The United States itself stands accused of failing to meet its obligations to deliver justice and fair treatment to the victims of violence by its own soldiers.

The attack on the Palestine Hotel led to the deaths of two journalists, José Couso of *Telecinco* in Spain, and Taras Protsiuk, a Ukrainian cameraman working for *Reuters*. On the same morning, United States forces attacked the offices of *Al-Jazeera* in Baghdad, killing the reporter Tareq Ayyoub.

Neither of these attacks has been independently investigated nor have the deaths been properly explained to the satisfaction of the victims' families, their friends and their colleagues.

On this day, too, we recall 11 other cases involving journalists and media staff who have died since March 2003 at the hands of US soldiers. In all of these 14 cases the ordeal of family and friends continues as they wait for credible investigation of the incidents and honest reports from the authorities about how and why their loved ones died.

It is not just foreign correspondents who have died. Indeed, two years after the invasion of Iraq the pain of this conflict is deeply felt by media staff and particularly among Iraqi journalists, who live in the shadows of a profession that not only reports on this war but is prominent among its victims.

Today the IFJ joins with the journalists of Iraq and other journalists' groups around the world in protesting over continued impunity in the killing of media staff.

We simply cannot understand the failure of the United States, which has acted at all times in the name of democracy and in the defence of human rights, to carry out proper and independent investigations of incidents in which their soldiers are involved.

It is not enough, we believe, for the military to investigate themselves.

The reports of the killings that have been carried out by the United States so far – and in some cases there have been no reports at all – follow the same unconvincing pattern: secrecy over the detail and nature of the report, a failure to examine all the evidence, paltry and cruelly insensitive shrugs of regret, and complete exoneration of responsibility of US personnel at all levels of command. It is without credibility and amounts to a denial of justice on a shocking scale.

We have looked at, for instance, the Pentagon's November 2004 report on the attack on the Palestine Hotel and, like other press freedom groups, such as the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York, we find it flawed and unconvincing.

We cannot accept it as the final word on this appalling incident. We request the United States to honour its commitment to democracy, human rights and justice for all, by revealing the whole truth all of all cases of media staff killed in still unexplained circumstances.

We enclose a list of cases that should be subject to review by the United States authorities. All of these need to be looked at in a convincing process of investigation, involving an exhaustive examination of the relevant evidence, and full disclosure of testimony.

We recognise, of course, that most of the journalists who die each year are killed by cruel extremists with whom it is impossible to make a moral compact.

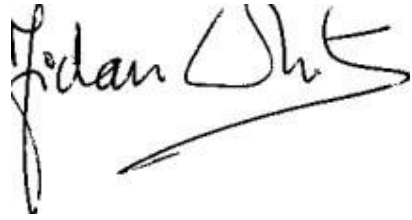
We condemn unreservedly those attacks and the people behind the current wave of hostage taking which has seen the kidnapping of our colleagues Florence Aubenas, of *Liberation*, and her Iraqi interpreter Hussein Hanoun al-Saadi, as well as Romanian journalists Marie-Jeanne Ion, reporter, and Sorin Miscoci, cameraman, for *Prima TV*, Eduard Ohanesian of the *Romania Libera newspaper*, and their Iraqi guide.

We will campaign vigorously for their release and for the isolation, arrest and trial of all those responsible for murder and kidnapping of journalists.

As we do that, we call on the United States to act to defend its traditions of liberty and justice by addressing the concerns of journalists around the world over the failure to take responsibility for the deaths of journalists and media staff in Iraq.

A prompt and convincing response to the questions raised over these deaths will end speculation over the targeting of journalists and media and provide irrefutable evidence for Iraq journalists and the people of Iraq that the democracy now in the making will deliver justice for all.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aidan White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Aidan White
General Secretary
International Federation of Journalists