



**International  
Federation  
of Journalists**

**JIM BOUMELHA**  
President

**AIDAN WHITE**  
General Secretary

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017

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Dear Secretary General,

You will know that in recent days the situation for journalists and media staff in Iraq has reached a new point of crisis following the assassination of Shihab Al-Timimi, the President of the Iraqi Union of journalists. His killing comes after a sustained period of death threats against the union leadership, when armed extremists have invaded and threatened the closure of the union's operations and when more than 250 journalists and media staff have been killed, many of them in targeted attacks, since 2003.

We strongly believe that the United Nations must raise its voice to protect journalists and media in Iraq and to encourage more effective action by the government of Iraq and those UN states who have pledged to bring about peace and reconciliation in the country.

This action is urgently needed. A year ago, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the world's largest journalists' group, hailed the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1738 as a dramatic leap forward for journalists' safety. But seeing the current crisis facing our colleagues in Iraq, we are convinced that more needs to be done – not least to mount a concerted effort to find and prosecute those who are targeting and killing media workers.

The IFJ and its member unions have offered unflagging support to the Iraqi Union of Journalists (IUJ) as it strives to protect its members. In January the IFJ General Secretary led a mission to Baghdad to discuss plans to strengthen media freedom and improve safety. At that time the Government promised a report on journalists' killings, but none has emerged.

The IFJ and the International News Safety Institute have worked with the IUJ and the Kurdistan Journalists' Syndicate and leading Iraqi media companies to form the Iraq Media Safety Group, which is dedicated to improving security for all media workers.

Through this work, journalists worldwide have shown their support for colleagues who face the grim task of chronicling the violence in desperate and dangerous circumstances.

Despite these dangers, the IUJ leaders have not wavered at all in their work even when terrorist groups have targeted the union because of its commitment to press freedom and independent journalism.

We believe that a timely statement of support from the United Nations and your public support for the work of the IUJ will show that the international community stands alongside journalists in these dark days.

We ask you to:

1. Express strongly the commitment of the United Nations to give priority to the security and protection of Iraqi journalists and to the leadership and structure of the IUJ in particular;
2. Call on all governments to support the work of the Iraq Media Safety Group and to provide resources to enable them to carry out their work;
3. Reiterate the importance of the Security Council resolution on support for journalists in conflict zones with calls on all governments with military operating in Iraq (particularly the US) to take fresh security measures to protect journalists and media.
4. Request the Iraqi government itself to redouble its efforts to find the extremists who are putting pressure on journalists and the IUJ and to improve levels of protection for all threatened Iraqi journalists.

The IFJ is ready to work closely with all those committed to independent journalism in Iraq and creating safe conditions for media and their unions. We will continue to urge our members, who number more than 600,000 around the world, to focus on Iraq and stand in solidarity with their colleagues.

If the United Nations can act decisively, it will not solve problems overnight, but it will make an immeasurable contribution towards reassuring Iraqi journalists that the international community recognises the current crisis and it will begin to repay some of the debt that we all owe Shihab A-Timimi and other media workers who have been sacrificed in this terrible conflict.

Sincerely,

Aidan White  
General Secretary

Jim Boumelha  
President