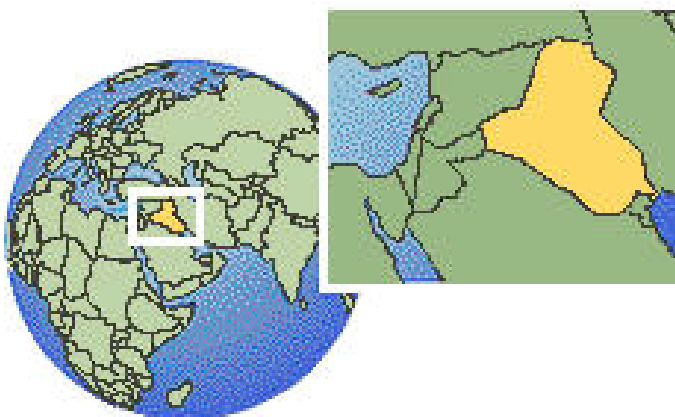


# **Building Solidarity:** The Challenge of Change Facing Iraqi Journalists

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## **Report**

*Mission to Iraq,  
January 19<sup>th</sup> –25<sup>th</sup> 2004*

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

A delegation of the International Federation of Journalists and the Federation of Arab Journalists, led by IFJ General Secretary Aidan White and FAJ Vice-President Mahboob Ali, carried out a week-long visit to Iraq during January 2004 and met with journalists groups, foreign correspondents, publishers, and senior representatives of Iraqi Governing Council.

The members of the mission were:

**Aidan White**, *IFJ*;

**Mahboob Ali**, *FAJ, President Yemen Journalists Association*;

**Jim Boumelha**, *IFJ Treasurer and National Union of Journalists (UK and Ireland)*;

**Olivier Da Lage**, *National Union of Journalists (France)*;

**Sofiene Ben Hamida**, *Deputy Sec-Gen FAJ and Association of Tunisian Journalists*; and

**Yahia Kalash**, *General Secretary, Egyptian Union of Journalists*.

The visit was arranged after an IFJ-FAJ agreement on co-operation made in Rabat in April last year. (*Rabat Declaration, Appendix 1.*)

The mission held meetings in Baghdad and Irbil, where significant agreements were reached with journalists groups from Baghdad (the Iraqi Union of Journalists) and Kurdistan (Kurdistan Association of Journalists) to work together on a trade union and professional development programme. The mission also examined the current media crisis in the country.

The mission was the first of its kind involving representatives of the international trade union movement and took place under difficult conditions, not least because of the poor security situation in Iraq. However, the mission members worked exceptionally well together throughout the visit ensuring that, in spite of potential dangers, the work was efficiently and safely carried out.

Arising from the mission, a programme of assistance for Iraqi journalists has been prepared including training for Iraqi journalists covering union building, ethical journalism, rights of women in media, news safety and media regulation, including the future of public broadcasting, media law and negotiations with the authorities. (*Draft Programme to Build Unity and Professionalism in Iraqi Journalism, Appendix 2.*)

This programme is urgently needed to improve professionalism and to spark a national debate about how journalists should organise themselves once elections take place and democratic rule is established.

During the visit the leaders of the mission sent a formal letter of complaint to the Governing Council expressing concern over the treatment of journalists by the occupation authorities and over attempts to bully journalists over what they write and broadcast. (*Appendix 3.*)

Meanwhile, the IFJ and FAJ continue to demand answers over the killings of seven journalists during the war, which have still not been fully explained.

## MISSION ACTIVITIES

*Safety Training:* On the initiative of the IFJ, the International News Safety Institute, the global news safety group supported by the IFJ and FAJ, organised a course of safety and security training in Baghdad for Iraqi journalists to coincide with the visit. This was the first practical training of its kind organised for Iraqi media staff and was assisted by the Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). The mission members visited the course and met with participants.

The mission discussed the work of IWPR, which is involved in providing training for Iraqi journalists in an extensive programme funded by the British Department for International Development. Although the circumstances for such work are difficult (the IWPR itself operates in a closely-guarded and protected district) mission members had some concern that the process of selecting journalists for courses was not as broad as it could be and feared that the training did not appear to connect with the difficult realities facing Iraqi journalists.

*Meetings with Unions:* Mission members met with representative of the Iraqi Journalists Union at their headquarters in Baghdad. This organisation, which has been suspended by Federation of Arab Journalists, clings to the status it had been granted under previous laws.

Despite attempts to elect new leaders (the Union was notoriously under the control of Saddam Hussein's son Uday, prior to the invasion last year) the organisation lacks credibility within the community of journalists and its interim leaders are uncertain about the future.

However, the existing leadership told the mission they are ready to dissolve the new board elected in doubtful circumstances last December, and are ready to encourage a national process of reconciliation and new elections when the time is right during 2004. The Union has indicated that it will support an IFJ-FAJ programme of work for journalists in Iraq and has said it would like to apply for early membership of the IFJ.

The mission members travelled to Irbil and met with the Kurdistan Syndicate of Journalists, which was admitted to the IFJ in 2002 as an associate member.

This Association is anxious not to be swallowed up by the Iraqi union and returned to its role as a marginalised regional grouping. The Kurdistan journalists support a united Iraq, but with special recognition for Kurdish interests, and any new realignment of a national journalists' body will probably have to take this into account. The Kurdistan journalists have agreed to work together with the Iraqi Union in support of an IFJ-FAJ programme of support for journalists.

The Mission also sought to meet with representatives of a new group, which aims to establish a new union for journalists. This initiative, apparently supported by the Coalition authorities and being led by the Editor of *As-Sabah*, a daily newspaper funded by the authorities, was due to be launched during the Mission's visit, but this did not happen. Despite the best efforts of the Mission to meet with the representatives of this group, including the organisation of two meetings, no interviews took place.

*Meetings with Foreign Media:* The Mission met with several leading groups of foreign correspondents. The representatives of *Al-Jazeera* presented a list of 21 incidents in which its journalists have been harassed by the occupation authorities. Almost every correspondent with whom the mission met voiced similar complaints.

Journalists said that the Coalition authorities were carefully monitoring their work. As a result there were numerous incidents of complaints by telephone from occupation media minders as well as threats about access to news events. The constant demand was for more “positive” coverage and less emphasis on the violence and difficulties facing occupation forces. There had been incidents when cassettes and material had been confiscated and journalists had been roughly treated. Leading media insisted on protection of anonymity of sources for this information. The fear of reprisals is a real one for journalists on the ground.

The correspondent of *Reuters* drew attention to a particular complaint over the treatment of three staff by US forces in January when they had been arrested, detained and beaten up. This incident was the subject of a public protest by Reuters chiefs over the US military handling of its complaint, which the IFJ also supported. (*See attached press release, February 5<sup>th</sup> 2004*).

The failure to properly investigate complaints was reinforced by a meeting with journalists who had been present at the Palestine Hotel when it was attacked by US forces in April and two journalists killed. They had never been interviewed and their testimony about the incident had not been taken.

*Meetings With Iraqi Media:* The problems facing Iraqi journalists are even greater than those of foreign correspondents. They deal with an occupation force that has little respect for journalists in the field and particularly local media staff who are regarded as hostile elements. In addition administrative orders have been put in place that regulate the Iraqi press. Violation of his order can end up in fines of up to \$1000 and 1 year in jail for reporters.

The Governing Council has as yet taken no action over the several thousand journalists and media staff employed in the information ministry (working for newspapers and broadcasters under the previous regime) who had been dismissed immediately after the occupation.

The role of the Governing Council has created deep unease within media circles. Action against broadcasters such as *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabya* and complaints of attempts to impose a code of conduct (*see appendix three*) have undermined professional confidence in this body.

Journalists are poorly paid – about \$100-150 US a month working for the local press, while those working for the international press could hope for up to \$1,000 a month. (These levels of pay are found throughout the country and account for the vulnerability of journalists to corrupt practices and further underscore problems of professionalism in media performance.)

There are more than 200 newspapers and magazines throughout the country. All of the

main political parties and interest groups have their own newspapers, some are published in Baghdad but edited abroad, others are fully-funded by the US administration or receive external support from individuals abroad.

Most publications are run at a loss with circulations of between 5,000 and 10,000. With a maximum of \$1000 anyone can publish an issue of a newspaper (based on an average estimated cost of a 16-page tabloid size paper).

*Az Zaman*, one of the most sophisticated daily newspapers has a reported circulation of 50,000 but is produced in West London (with only a few pages produced in Baghdad). The publisher is entrepreneur and former Ba'ath party dignitary Saad Al Bazaaz. The Mission visited *al Mada* publishing house, which produces a daily. The owner, publisher and editor-in-chief, former Iraqi Communist Party boss Fakhri Karim, said his ambition is to produce a viable paper. He is investing in new presses and a distribution system and plans to launch a satellite TV.

There is a very vibrant atmosphere in the press, although there's also a lot of concern about the quality of journalism and many people said that work to raise awareness on professional and ethical issues was an essential element of any professional support programme.

In broadcasting, the scene is dominated by terrestrial and satellite channels, one of which is sponsored by the occupation forces and suffers in credibility as a result. Channels such as *Al-Jazeera*, *Al-Arabbya* and *Abu Dhabi TV* are much more popular because they have a stronger and critical approach to coverage of the occupation.

The US and UK supported Media Development Team (MDT) in Baghdad encourages new broadcasters, but the indigenous landscape has proved less diverse than first thought despite a regional campaign and a public information campaign to inform media people of licensing requirements. The Kurdish regions have been operating their own licensing system and have a diverse broadcasting landscape. The frequency spectrum in Baghdad is close to saturation and a strategy to deal with this within the national plan is under discussion.

An urgent priority is the establishment of a national regulator. Steps are now being taken to set up an Iraqi Communications and Media Commission, probably along the lines of those set up in Bosnia and Afghanistan. This Commission will be solely responsible for licensing and regulating telecommunications, broadcasting and information services and other media in Iraq. The plan is to have the commission established by the middle of March 2004. At the same time, a plan is under discussion to establish an Iraqi Public Broadcasting Corporation, which will take over the work of the US-supported International Media Network (IMN), which was put in place after the invasion. The principle objective of the Corporation is to create a mechanism to ensure that after July 1, when the transition to local administration is due, there will be a genuine public broadcaster in place, one independent of government or political influence. Whether this is feasible or likely remains an open question.

The IMN is reported to be the most expensive US government media project in history at an estimated £4 million a month. IMN journalism has suffered not least because of the lack of sources of information, which mean journalists cover continuous Coalition news

conferences, interviews and staged photo-opportunities, but because staff salaries have been based upon old Ministry of Information pay scales, paying a reporter the equivalent of \$120 a month. The main television station funded by the coalition has the lowest viewing figures of all the stations.

In sum, journalists are confronted by a myriad of huge problems ranging from insecurity of employment and poor working conditions, no legal framework, low professional standards, lack of access to information, security concerns and fear of the military occupation, problems of printing and distribution. In these circumstances, the Mission concentrated efforts on discussion with the journalists' syndicate and other groups on the best way to build solidarity between journalists in order to begin to confront these issues.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The mission concludes that journalists in Iraq are hungry for change. They are determined to break the stranglehold of politically-driven control of journalism and genuinely wish to create a democratic media culture that will respect editorial independence and pluralism.
2. But that is a challenge in the current political, social and economic climate. The aftermath of war and the highly-charged internal political landscape, make journalism a dangerous business, both socially and professionally. Although for the first time journalists say they are free, many still lack the professionalism and confidence in their independence that is vital to the future.
3. In addition, there is a clear challenge to create unity among journalists in the current climate. Nevertheless, all journalists, provided they respect press freedom and respect for human rights, have a stake in the future of media in Iraq.
4. The mission members discussed a practical programme of work for Iraqi journalists and that is attached to this report. This work will provide opportunities for Iraqi journalists to work together on professional and social issues and to debate among themselves the scope, nature and structure of the future organisations they will need.
5. This programme is a start, but it is essential that the occupation authorities create the conditions for the exercise of journalism free from intimidation of any kind. The mission believes that the occupation authorities have failed to win the confidence of journalists – both foreign correspondents and local reporters – that they understand and support the core principles of journalism.
6. The Mission members note the commitment on all sides to work together and, concerning the relaunch of the Union of Journalists, to carry out meaningful reforms of the organisation.
7. The Mission recommends that during the coming period it will be of vital importance to promote a national dialogue and discussion within journalism about the scope, nature and constitution of journalists' organisations, which take account of the diversity of the media community and which can properly

- represent the social and professional interests of all journalists.
8. The Mission believes that the reshaping of the media landscape in Iraq, including the creation of a genuine public broadcasting system, the introduction of effective self-regulation of media content, and the creation of a media system that respect international standards of free expression as well as core labour standards, requires the consent of all media professionals. Structures for dialogue to ensure Iraqi journalists are properly consulted on all these matters should be put in place.
  9. The Mission believes that some actions of the occupation authorities undermine efforts to create a confident, secure and professional community of journalists and, indeed, may be contributing to the creation of divisions within the Iraqi journalism community.
  10. Actions taken to try to manipulate and control the media by the military have created a deep sense of unease within media circles and undermine efforts to create support for genuinely independent journalism.
  11. The failure to investigate openly and honestly media complaints, whether from *Al-Jazeera*, *Reuters* or the wider<sup>1</sup> international community of journalists over killings of media people during the Iraq War have created an atmosphere of cynicism and ill-will that is potentially damaging to efforts to create a democratic media culture in the country.
  12. The mission believes that all attempts to discipline, control and censor information must be withdrawn in favour of confidence-building measures aimed at building respect for editorial independence.
  13. This will not happen unless there are urgent actions taken to alleviate the crisis of unemployment in Iraqi media, to improve the appalling social conditions under which most journalists work and to create the professional space for the exercise of ethical and quality journalism.
  14. The mission is confident that given the right support, journalists and media themselves are ready to take up the challenge of change once the occupation is ended and democratic rule is established.
  15. There is a real chance now that despite their many differences, journalists are prepared to work together to build a campaign for media rights and independent journalism. This must be at the heart of any strategy for democracy and human rights in Iraq.

The IFJ and FAJ wish to extend their thanks to all of those who made the mission possible, including Robert Shaw at the IFJ and the FAJ secretariat in Cairo, and particularly to journalists in Iraq who were open and generous in their approach to the visit.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Justice Denied on the Road To Baghdad*, report of the IFJ on unexplained killings of media staff during Iraq War, [www.ifj.org](http://www.ifj.org)

## **Building Confidence in Solidarity**

*International Federation of Journalists  
Federation of Arab Journalists*

### **Rabat Declaration**

*The leaders of the International Federation of Journalists and the Federation of Arab Journalists meeting together in Rabat, Morocco, on April 12<sup>th</sup> 2003,*

***Insisting*** that all journalists must be able to work in safe and secure conditions,

***Demanding*** that all governments must remove obstacles to press freedom and the exercise of free journalism, and

***Believing*** that journalists around the world must work together to build global solidarity around principles of pluralism and democracy,

***Declare***

- 1. Their total condemnation of all forms of interference in the work of journalists and particularly the killing and brutal intimidation of journalists during the current war on Iraq and*
- 2. Their intention to work together for an independent international inquiry into the deaths of journalists and all incidents of intimidation, detention and harassment affecting media staff during the Iraq conflict.*

*Furthermore, the IFJ and FAJ,*

***Noting*** the need for a wider and deeper dialogue among journalists about press freedom and the defence of professionalism, particularly in a time of tension,

***Believing*** that the restructuring of media in Iraq must reflect the highest standards of pluralism, press freedom and editorial independence

***Convinced*** that journalists' social and professional rights are best protected through the creation of strong, independent and inclusive associations and unions of journalists

***Agree*** to work together with the following objectives,

- 1. To ensure the voice of press freedom within the Arab world is heard in international discussions on strategies for restructuring of media in Iraq*
- 2. To assist Iraqi journalists launch a new, unified and vigorous organisation committed to defence of social and professional rights for all Iraqi journalists*



3. *To defend the rights of all media staff in the Middle East and particularly Palestinian journalists;*
4. *To support the International News Safety Institute, ensuring that all Arab journalists and media staff have access to the training, assistance and benefits of the global campaign for news safety*
5. *To organise professional training programmes for journalists and actions to strengthen respect for ethical and professional values*
6. *To establish a common platform of demands that reflects the priorities for journalists at world and regional level in the formulation of global trade policy and at the World Summit on the Information Society and*
7. *To support the creation of journalists' trades unions and independent organisations of journalists to fight for better working conditions in journalism.*

*The IFJ and FAJ agree to establish a joint commission to oversee co-operation between the two organisations and to implement the following immediate plan of action:*

- *A study of the conditions of journalists in Iraq,*
- *The organisation of a joint workshop on freedom of the press to be convened by the FAJ in Cairo during 2003,*
- *The formulation of a joint programme on training on professional and labour relations issues,*
- *Support for the International News Safety Institute including participation of a FAJ representative on the board,*
- *Arrangements for participation, on a mutual basis, in meetings of both organisations,*
- *The establishment of a direct and continuing line of communication between the headquarters of both organisations to assist future collaboration.*

*In pursuit of these objectives the IFJ, recognising the FAJ as the representative regional group of Arab journalists, welcomes the participation of FAJ members in the work of the IFJ.*

*Finally, the IFJ and FAJ congratulate the National Press Union of Morocco, a leading member of both organisations, for hosting this historical initiative and creating the opportunity for dialogue, which gives important and timely impetus to the cause of unity, solidarity and professionalism in journalism worldwide.*

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**International Federation of Journalists  
Federation of Arab Journalists**

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**Draft Programme to Build Unity and  
Professionalism in Iraqi Journalism**



*INTRODUCTION*

*Enclosed is a draft project for work with journalists and media in Iraq. The programme arises from a mission to Iraq carried out by the IFJ in co-operation with the Federation of Arab Journalists from January 19<sup>th</sup>- 25<sup>th</sup> (attached is a copy of the communiqué released after the visit).*

*Meetings were held in Baghdad and Irbil with journalists' groups and Iraqi and international media as well as with representatives of the Coalition Provisional Authority, the Governing Council and the Media Development Team. This was the first visit of an international union delegation to the country since the end of the war.*

*During the mission a programme of work has been identified in consultation with Iraqi colleagues. At the same time as the visit the IFJ sponsored, with the support of the International News Safety Institute, two seminars of risk-awareness training for Iraqi journalists in Baghdad. This was the first such training provided for Iraqi colleagues.*

*The IFJ believes that urgent steps should be taken to support confidence-building measures to promote a culture of independence in Iraqi journalism and, in particular, to assist in the creation of a new and unified professional and trade union for Iraqi journalists.*

*BACKGROUND: IFJ WORK IN THE ARAB WORLD*

The IFJ is engaged in an extensive programme of activities with Arab journalists and journalists' organisations through the Media for Democracy in the Mediterranean programme.

The IFJ works closely with the Federation of Arab Journalists. In March 2003 in Rabat the IFJ and FAJ signed the Rabat Declaration, which committed both groups to close co-operation in, among other things, the establishment of 'a new, unified and vigorous organisation committed to defence of social and professional rights of all Iraqi journalists'. The joint mission of the IFJ/FAJ to Baghdad was an initiative arising from this declaration.

The IFJ is currently carrying out trade union and professional development work in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and Palestine. We have recently admitted members from the Yemen, Jordan and Iraq.

The developments in Iraq coincide with fresh progress towards press freedom in the Arab world accompanied by a new willingness for reform within the journalists' movement. The success of the Arab broadcasting channels (*Al-Jazeera*, *Abu Dhabi Television* and *Al-Arabbya*, in particular) are evidence of a new pluralism in the audiovisual sector which challenges not only existing national regimes over controls on media, but provides a viable and authentic voice for Arab opinion on the global media scene.

The IFJ is aiming to build upon these positive developments in two ways:

- *To promote the creation of independent and unified national journalists' unions and associations.*

Few of the existing organisations are trade union in character but there is a growing demand for social rights to be brought into the mainstream of concerns dealt with by these groups. There is scope, therefore, for trade union development activities, including safety training, throughout the region.

Journalists' groups in many countries are organised as professional associations. The process of transforming them into unions that can defend both professional and social rights is not easy. Often there are national laws that prohibit the extension of this responsibility. In many countries there are no relations at all between journalists' groups and the national trade union movement.

- *To work with Arab journalists' groups to strengthen existing levels of professionalism and to encourage more impartial and ethical journalism.*

In particular, there is a need for more work on issues such as tolerance, editorial independence, and internal pluralism in broadcasting, including conversion of state media into public service institutions. In March 2004 an ethics seminar is being held with the Federation of Arab Journalist in Cairo.

With these general principles in mind, and given the current state of crisis in Iraq, the IFJ and FAJ mission to Iraq considers it of paramount importance to launch a programme of work to strengthen the role of journalism in Iraqi society by fostering independence and the creation of free trade unions; strengthening the commitment to core professional and ethical values; establishing structures for dialogue over new laws and rules for Iraqi media and building confidence within journalists through specific actions to promote journalists' safety and gender rights.

#### *IFJ PROGRAMME FOR JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA UNION BUILDING IN IRAQ*

After decades of state control of media and a war in which journalism itself played a significant role, the needs of Iraqi media and journalists are enormous. Following the war and the collapse of the regime of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi media professionals have to start

from scratch – building new organisations under a new order of professionalism based upon principles of independence, journalistic integrity and democratic pluralism.

The IFJ programme set out here has been drafted after consultations with Iraqi colleagues in Baghdad and Irbil and plans a series of initial activities designed to

- Promote unity and solidarity among Iraqi journalists and media staff and to assist them in the creation of a new union structure (*union building*)
- Encourage professionalism in journalism through ethics training (*ethical conduct*)
- Help journalists participate effectively in debate on new media policies, including public broadcasting and regulation of content (*Regulation and broadcasting*)
- Stimulate debate about the need for equality in media, in particular, in the recruitment, training and portrayal of women in media (*Media and Gender*)
- Ensure Iraqi journalists have access to urgent training and assistance to promote safety in journalism (*Safety of Journalists*)

The programme builds on the extensive experience of carrying out projects of media assistance in a wide range of transition societies including regions affected by conflict. Experience in Bosnia, Serbia, central Asia and the countries of central and eastern Europe tells us that while it is important to provide financial support directly to individual media organizations to help them establish themselves, there are no quick-fix solutions to the problem of creating a democratic media landscape.

Media support must be based upon a strategy of providing assistance that encourages democratic practice and standards, including strong and independent associations and unions of journalists. Iraqi journalists and media professionals must themselves be entrusted with the tasks of developing the structures for independent journalism, and for building their own media organisations and professional groups.

**The IFJ has obtained the agreement of journalists' leaders to work together around this programme and to stimulate a national debate and dialogue on the shape and character of a new Iraqi journalists' movement.** This initial programme is based upon both a short-term and a long-term perspective.

In the short-term media assistance is needed to help journalists protect their independence and defend their rights at work. In the longer term a coherent and defined community of journalists, respecting international principles of union rights and professional practices, is needed to ensure that journalists have a voice in the reconstruction process.

In the months since the end of the conflict there has been a rush of activity in the media sector with numerous new publications and a range of new media outlets, as well as more extensive media initiatives supported by the international administration.

This process is haphazard, with new newspapers, magazines, radio and television outlets springing up throughout the country. Work is being carried out on the preparation of a legal framework and regulatory mechanisms to govern media in Iraq. The Governing

Council is implementing policies to counteract inflammatory journalism that may hinder the peace and reconstruction process, but these are not widely understood or supported. (*See enclosed letter to Governing Council from IFJ-FAJ delegation*).

The problem in all of this is that so long as effective and representative structures are not in place to give Iraqi journalists a voice in this process, the short-term may see growing problems of instability in the relations between journalists and the international administration.

Little has been done to assist in building local non-governmental or regulatory structures in media, notably in the area of association and union building. This is a vital and urgent ingredient in the process of confidence-building among Iraqi journalists. It will also ensure that they are able to influence the process of media development in the country.

This programme helps to establish the structures that will allow for such consultation in order to ensure that Iraqi media legislation follows internationally accepted principles and is understood by Iraqi journalists themselves. (A draft code of conduct produced for a meeting of international press freedom NGOs in Athens in early 2003, and still the basis for much of the media development strategies in Baghdad had only been discussed with a small minority of Iraqi journalists.) It is urgent that ethical issues and media policy questions are elaborated by journalists themselves.

The IFJ programme will lead to a more settled body of work to strengthen associations of journalists, improve the safety of media staff, identifying training needs and prepare a proposal for a national training structure for journalists. It is designed to involve networks of leading US, European and Arab journalists in advising and evaluating the activities and mapping out a long-term programme of support for independent media. The target groups are the Iraqi journalists, editors and journalism trainers.

The main activities consist of a series of seminars and meetings throughout Iraq on safety training, union building, gender rights, ethical practice and regulation of media.

It is proposed to hold a national conference to launch the programme and a review meeting to evaluate activities and to identify further actions to improve the social and professional environment for Iraqi journalists.

A detailed plan for subsequent medium and long-term support to independent media will be prepared.

#### *TARGET GROUPS AND EXPECTED RESULTS*

The target group will be journalists and media staff working in all sectors of Iraqi media.

Given the complete breakdown of the journalistic system in Iraq and the fact that new papers are being created on a daily basis, it is currently not possible to give exact numbers of beneficiaries.

However, it is estimated that throughout the country around 5,000 journalists and media staff will form the pool from which participation in the project will be drawn and who

will benefit from the project. (The Kurdistan Journalists Association represents 837 members.) Around 250 journalists will take part directly in the proposed activities.

Arising from the programme the expected results are:

- The creation of independent and democratic associations and unions of journalists and media staff well-placed to represent the rights of journalists, to act as a viable partner to the regulatory structures and to speak for the community of journalists in all policy matters related to media;
- The preparation of a plan of action for ethical and professional journalism and the creation of sustainable, professional system of journalism training providing journalists with the skills and knowledge needed to report in a timely, accurate and balanced fashion.
- Improvements in the levels of protection of journalists with urgent and immediate actions to promote essential standards of safety for Iraqi journalists through safety training.
- Better awareness and recognition of the need for equality in the training, recruitment and development opportunities for women in journalism and for professionalism in the portrayal of women in media
- Structures for dialogue to be created both within media and with the authorities on issues related to broadcasting and future regulation of media and self-regulation of journalism in Iraq

The programme will also see the establishment of working links between Iraqi journalists and their colleagues in the Arab world, through the Federation of Arab Journalists, and in Europe and the US to help create a lasting framework for viable and durable levels of professionalism.

Immediately, the project will strengthen existing partnerships and identify additional partners for these actions to be effective and, at the same time, to start practical work that assist Iraqi journalists, support the process of promoting independent journalism and create a framework for developing of detailed future projects in support of professional journalism that will play a full role in the creation of a democratic society in Iraq. The initial programme is designed to last 16 months.

The project foresees local ownership once the process of identifying additional local partners is completed. It is the aim of the project to establish with Iraqi journalists, editors and trainers the strategies and structures needed to promote independent journalism and the creation of strong and independent unions of journalists.

The project will provide the current initiatives to write laws for Iraqi media with the appropriate local partners. Currently these initiatives take place in something of a vacuum and if laws are to work, Iraqi journalists need to be informed and consulted.

The project approach is to be inclusive and to promote confidence-building measures using a network of skill and expertise, notably among Arab-language journalists, editors and journalism trainers.

#### *PROPOSED ACTIVITIES*

1. A further mission will be carried out in April or May 2004, to identify local coordinators for each region for this programme and will identify and appoint Iraqi training experts. Local offices will be established to pursue the project activities and ensure good communication between target group and project partners.
2. The IFJ and the Arab Journalists Federation will establish **a journalists' advisory group** to work with Iraqi journalists and to assist in the elaboration of the programme. (The members of the mission to Iraq will make themselves available to assist in this preliminary work.)
3. **A national co-ordinator** will be established in Baghdad to oversee the development of activities on the ground, coordinate missions and project activities. There will be **two regional co-ordinators** nominated by the Iraqi Journalists Union and the Kurdistan Association of Journalists.
4. **A bi-monthly project newsletter** will be produced as well as a dedicated project **web-site**. It will report on project progress and foster networks and exchange of experience and information between journalism trainers and leading media professionals.
5. **A survey** will be carried out of media and employment issues in the information sector.

#### **Project Theme One: Independent and democratic associations of journalists for Iraq**

Under the government of Saddam Hussein the Iraqi Journalists Union was a politically corrupt institution directly controlled by the President's son. The collapse of this structure and the explosion in media outlets means the majority of Iraqi journalists have no unified voice or representative national organisation.

In the current situation it is clear that it would be unwise and counterproductive to impose a centralised Iraqi journalists' union or association. It is therefore proposed to use the programme of activities to promote co-operation between different regional groups and seeking agreement on a trade union development programme and a national journalists' code and structures for dialogue leading to a unified national approach on media policy and strategies for association building.

Meetings should focus on a concrete subject of immediate concern to journalists – safety, gender and social rights.

The only free organisations of journalists have existed in the northern part of the country. One of them, the Kurdistan Association of Journalists in Iraq, has been admitted into membership of the IFJ.

During the mission the IFJ met with representatives of existing groups. It is clear that much needs to be done to build confidence among Iraqi journalists in the organisations that are needed to represent them.

The former syndicate of journalists has been suspended by the Federation of Arab Journalists and has recognised the need to carry out genuine reforms, including the dissolution of the existing leadership and the creation of a new and credible organisation.

It is proposed to organise **three trade union training seminars**. Each seminar would be combined with a discussion on the role and establishment of journalists' unions and associations to improve working conditions. Total participants: 120.

### **Project Theme Two: Professionalism and Ethical Conduct**

The journalists of Iraq find themselves in the midst of a historic turning point, not only for their country, but also for journalists throughout the Arab world. There is a great solidarity between journalists in the Arab world with their colleagues in Iraq. There is also a strong and growing belief in the virtues of professional and impartial journalism as a cornerstone of democratic change in the region.

For that reason, seminars and production of materials in Arabic, which strengthen core professional values, will be very important in the coming months. The proposes the production of materials covering issues such as human rights reporting, covering elections, codes of ethics, self-regulation and editorial independence.

We propose **two meetings** on these questions, one in Irbil and the other in Baghdad. Total participants: 100.

In the current period of instability, which is likely to last for a considerable period, the role of media and journalists will be vital in helping to create the flow of reliable, professional information which citizens will need to counter rumour, speculation and misinformation about their future. The IFJ and FAJ will draw upon work currently being carried out in an extensive programme of activities with Arab journalists and journalists' organisations through the Media for Democracy in the Mediterranean programme.

At the same time, we propose to use these events to build links with colleagues and organisations of journalists in other parts of the region is an important and urgent requirement.

This network of solidarity will strengthen the defences of professionalism at a time when journalism in Iraq will be put under tremendous pressure from community and political groups seeking to enlist media to support them in political struggles that are already emerging in the difficult post-war period.

### **Project Theme Three: Safety of Journalists**



Given the large numbers of journalists and media staff killed and injured during the Iraqi conflict (the IFJ, which has monitored the situation closely, has identified the deaths of 31 media staff) and the continued level of instability in the country the safety of journalists must be paramount. Experience has shown that in the early post conflict stage when journalists are often in the vanguard of the democratisation process they are particularly vulnerable to pressure, intimidation and physical assaults.

Based on considerable experience in improving the conditions in which journalists work, the IFJ has also recently launched the International News Safety Institute (INSI). This Institute has the support of almost 100 leading media organisations, journalists' groups and press freedom organisations worldwide. This body has been established to promote safety standards and safety training of journalists around the world. The IFJ has also carried out safety training for journalists in conflict zones (Ivory Coast, Palestine, Nepal and Pakistan) over the past 12 months.

During the Mission, the International News Safety Institute, which also is supported by the Federation of Arab Journalists, carried out two safety seminars in Baghdad for Iraqi journalists. These were the first opportunities for Iraqi journalists and media staff to have access to such training.

Given the extremely difficult circumstances facing journalists throughout the country, the IFJ would propose **six further safety-training sessions** in Baghdad and Irbil, Basra, Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah and Falluja. Total participants: 110.

The first session, in Baghdad, would be a training of trainers seminar for ten colleagues in order to develop some immediate local capacity to support Iraqi journalists. The IFJ safety handbook *Live News* will be translated into Arabic for this work. (Copy Enclosed.)

*Project Theme Four: Awareness and recognition of the need for equality in media*

The IFJ proposes to organise **a national seminar** related to the training, recruitment and development of equal opportunities for women in journalism and for professionalism in the portrayal of women in media. The IFJ will use as a basis for this work, the Action Plan on gender issues adopted by the IFJ Congress in Seoul 2001. Total participants: 50.

The emergence of new forms of organisation for journalists and media workers as well as the establishment of a new framework for media means that issues related to gender rights – both in the workplace and in the content of media and information services – are of paramount importance. This meeting will prepare an action plan for Iraqi media on gender issues.

*Project Theme Five: Structures for dialogue – media regulation and broadcasting*

One of the key problems identified by the IFJ-FAJ mission is that caused by the absence of rules and laws governing media. There has been a legacy of harsh laws imposed by the Ba'ath Party that seriously violate freedom of expression, as well as several measures introduced by the Coalition Provisional Authority that restrict rather than promote free expression. The mission members recognise that a significant change in Iraqi political culture is needed.

Politicians and other public figures need to appreciate the implications of a free media in a democratic society, which will expose them to intense scrutiny and sometimes harsh criticism. As long as laws from the past remain on the books, they pose a significant threat to independent and critical journalism. For example, under criminal law a journalist who insults any part of the population is liable to be sent to prison for up to ten years. Such laws have a chilling effect.

Since taking over the CPA has introduced harsh measures of its own, banning publications it deems inflammatory and restricting the right to free assembly. These measures are incompatible with the CPA's stated aim to bring democracy to Iraq and must be repealed and should be repealed. The establishment of new media structures – such as the Iraqi Media Network – are meaningless unless the independence of media and journalists is guaranteed.

It is imperative, therefore, to establish a culture of transparency and democracy in media and the project proposes to examine what structures for dialogue are required to ensure that journalists' groups are fully consulted over Iraq's new media landscape, in particular, this must cover public broadcasting, freedom of information and structures for self-regulation and ensure the abolition of existing censorship functions.

The project proposes a **major national conference** in Basra to examine these issues. Total participants: 60.

The programme is based on an established safety-training course now considered standard for war reporting. The IFJ will translate its extensive safety handbook *Live News* into Arabic to make it available for Iraqi journalists. (An English language copy of this handbook, which was published in March 2003 is enclosed.)

*BRIDGING THE GAP: PROGRAMME REVIEW CONFERENCE, BAGHDAD*

After the completion of the first eight months of the programme it is proposed to organise a conference in Baghdad bringing together the Iraqi journalists, editors and trainers with their colleagues from the networks to bring together the strands of the project, assess its progress and discuss it with other relevant actors.

Also invited will be key representatives of journalists groups from Europe and North America. The conference will last two and a half days. The meeting would further define the needs and priorities of Iraqi journalists in the context of an unstable and 'potentially' rapidly changing situation and will focus on the following questions:

- How to establish cooperation between regional journalists organisations and create a national umbrella journalists union or federation?
- What are the further needs of Iraqi journalists in terms of the legal and regulatory environment regarding social rights and professional conditions?
- How can Iraqi journalists be properly represented in the process of developing new media policy and regulations?

This meeting will review the findings of the employment survey and start up the discussion about priority issues for the further union development work. It is proposed to invite about 40 participants. The conference languages will be English and Arabic.

Based on the results of the seminars and the national conference the IFJ will start the preparation of Arabic union training materials for safety and association building. Experts identified through the IFJ/Arab journalist experts advisory group will be identified to develop a union training handbook that will tackle core social and professional issues including working conditions, rights at work, safety, editorial independence, freedom of expression, election reporting, journalistic ethics, gender equality, human rights and social rights.

The project partners – IFJ, FAJ – and their respective Iraqi counterparts and networks will undertake an internal evaluation of the project. The evaluation meeting will include project partners and the international journalists experts advisory group. The project will end with the development of a plan of action for future phases of the project. This strategy for strengthening independent journalism will identify priority areas for activities building on the expertise and structure created by the project.

The strategy will follow-up on the initial programme and will prepare detailed plans for subsequent phases, which subject to discussion during the pilot phase with the network of Iraqi and international journalists, editors and journalism trainers, can include:

- Seminars on strengthening unions and associations (recruitment, rights and responsibilities of journalists, representing journalists' interests, interaction with authorities and regulatory bodies etc)
- Safety standards;
- Strengthening structures for associations and training (press houses, which give access to internet, reference materials, meeting place for journalists, housing training seminars etc)
- Training trainer's seminars based on the modules developed in the pilot phase;

#### *PROGRAMME METHODOLOGY*

The project methods are based on the IFJ's considerable experience of providing assistance to developing journalists' organisations in newly democratic societies.

The methodology will be adapted to the unique situation of Iraq. In particular it will address the concerns of Iraqi journalists over their status, their working conditions and their relationship with the international administration and encouraging a process of positive engagement by journalists with the aim of assisting in the transition to a democratic Iraqi administration and the creation of a vigorous civil society built upon transparent and democratic structures including within media.

In particular it aims to work in close co-operation with representatives of the Federation of Arab Journalists and other national Arab journalists organisations. The programme will aim to establish networks of Iraqi journalists through the regional meetings that will form the basis for a longer-term programme of organisational development.

Focusing the first meetings on the priority issue of safety will build confidence among Iraqi journalists that the project and media development work is addressing their immediate interests. Experience shows that even in the most divided of journalists' communities, safety is one issue upon which all journalists can agree and co-operate.

The project will be evaluated through project partner and expert meetings. Invited to take part will be leading US, European and Arab journalists to act as advisers and evaluators of the project. They will be selected from leading journalist unions and from the Federation of Arab Journalists and leading Arab unions including Morocco, Egypt, and Palestine. At the end of the project the ICFTU will be asked to evaluate the full work of the project.

The IFJ is the lead partner and assumes overall responsibility for the implementation of the project and co-ordination with project partners. The IFJ will also be specifically responsible for the association and union building work. The new International Institute of News Safety will support the safety training.

The team proposed for implementation of the project includes: IFJ Project Director, IFJ Project assistant, IFJ Accountant, IFJ National Coordinator, 2 Iraqi local office coordinators, Iraqi project director, Iraqi project assistant. Plus: safety trainers, union building experts, 3 Local training coordinators (partners to be identified in the first step of the project), 4 International training experts, 8 Local training experts, 1 Publication editor.

#### *EXPECTED OUTCOMES*

The project will develop a coherent and realistic framework for the establishment of regional and national journalists' unions and associations able to represent the professional and trade union interests of journalists. The practical outputs from the project will be as follows:

- Assessment study on social and professional conditions of Iraqi journalists
- 150 journalists trained on safety
- Handbook on union building in English and Arabic, 1000 copies
- IFJ safety handbook in Arabic, 1000 copies
- Ethical issues and editorial independence report, available to journalism trainers on-line, 250 copies in Arabic, 100 in English
- Survey on employment and social conditions of Iraqi journalists, 250 copies in Arabic, 100 in English
- Strategy for future action, published in Arabic and English, 500 copies

The immediate aim of the project is to produce strategies, modules and structures for extension of project work. As such every aspect of the project has a multiplying effect.

In particular, the union training modules are specifically defined to be used in practical training in subsequent projects. They will form the backbone for training of journalists in union affairs. The associations created by the project will be open to journalists and will extend the direct impact of the project to new members.

The IFJ training handbook and the safety training materials will ensure that the majority of Iraqi journalists will have access to this information and experience to be used in their own environment.

## PLAN OF ACTION

Year	Activity	Location (city)	Implementing body
<b>Year 1</b>			
<b>Month 1</b>			
Co-ordination	1 <sup>st</sup> project planning meeting	Brussels	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Union building/ safety/Ethics	Planning Phase, Mission to Iraq, select experts, contact partners, target group,	Brussels, Bagdad	IFJ, FAJ, Iraqi Partners
<b>Month 2</b>			
Union building/ safety	Confirm experts, contacts with partners and target group	Brussels,	IFJ
Union Training	Confirm experts, contacts with partners and target group	Baghdad	
<b>Month 3</b>			IFJ
Co-ordination	Establish national coordinator. Assess sites for local offices, select coordinators, identify partners	Baghdad	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Programme Launch	Launch Conference	Iraq	IFJ, FAJ
Co-ordination	Establish local offices and local co-ordinators/ 1 <sup>st</sup> Newsletter/ website	Iraq	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
<b>Month 4</b>			IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Union building/ safety	Training of Trainers Safety seminar/ Union workshop.	Brussels / Iraq	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
<b>Month 5</b>			
Co-ordination	2 <sup>nd</sup> project newsletter published	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ
Union building/ safety	Safety Training seminar/ preparation of materials Ethical Journalism (Irbil)	Iraq	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
<b>Month 6</b>			IFJ
Co-ordination	Continued co-ordination on missions and seminars	Iraq, Brussels,	IFJ
Union building/ safety	Safety training and association building seminar	Iraq	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Training	Assess professional training needs.	Iraq	Iraqi Partners
<b>Month 7</b>			
Co-ordination	Continued co-ordination. Launch of employment survey Safety training and association building seminar 3 <sup>rd</sup> newsletter published,	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ, Iraqi Partners

Union building/ safety	Safety training and association building seminar	Iraq	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
<b>Month 8</b>			
Co-ordination	Preparation of Bridging the Gap: national Iraqi journalism conference	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Union building/ safety	Safety training and union building seminars.	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Training	Publication of employment and training needs study	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ
<b>Month 9</b>			
Co-ordination	Bridging the Gap: National Iraqi journalism conference, 4 <sup>th</sup> project newsletter published	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Union building/ safety	Iraqi journalism conference, establish umbrella association	Baghdad	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Training	Conference on Gender Issues	Iraq	Iraqi Partners
<b>Month 10</b>			
Co-ordination	Report from Iraqi Journalism conference published	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ
Union building/ safety	Report from Iraqi Journalism conference review	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ
<b>Month 11</b>			
Co-ordination	5 <sup>th</sup> project newsletter published	Iraq, Brussels,	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Union building/ safety	TU handbook published	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ
<b>Month 12</b>			
Co-ordination	Co-ordination of missions	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ
Union/ building/ safety	Safety Seminar/Safety handbook	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
<b>YEAR 2</b>			
<b>Month 1</b>			
Co-ordination	6 <sup>th</sup> project newsletter published,	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Union building/ safety	Ethical Journalism meeting (Baghdad) Handbook	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ
<b>Month 2</b>			
Co-ordination	Project evaluation meeting	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
Union building/ safety		Iraq, Brussels	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
<b>Month 3</b>			
Co-ordination	Prepare strategy document and final report. 7 <sup>th</sup> project newsletter	Iraq, Brussels	IFJ, Iraqi Partners
<b>Month 4</b>			
Co-ordination	Production of strategy document and final report	Iraq, Brussels, Maastricht	IFJ, FAJ, Iraqi Partners
Union building/ safety	Evaluation of project activity	Iraq, Brussels	ICFTU

### Appendix Three

# *IFJ-FAJ Letter to Iraqi Governing Council*

*Mission to Iraq, January 19th -24th 2003*

Honourable Members  
Governing Council, Baghdad

January 24th 2004

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the International Federation of Journalists and the Federation of Arab Journalists, the largest organisations of journalists world-wide and in the Arab world, which are currently carrying out a mission of solidarity to Iraq in support of Iraqi journalists, we write to express our serious concerns over recent actions, taken in the name of the Governing Council, which undermines efforts to create a democratic media culture in Iraq.

Indeed, we believe that reported attempts to dictate to Iraqi journalists how they must report on the current crisis smack of old-style media manipulation and show contempt for media and free journalism. In particular, we are concerned over the following:

1. The suspension of TV channel Al-Arabya because it broadcast a tape from Saddam Hussein before his arrest. This suspension, of dubious legality, is based on professional concerns, which could and should be resolved by effective dialogue with journalists and editors.

The choice of news items is an editorial matter alone and we note that, in this case, the tape in question was widely broadcast by international media around the world. We respect all concern for fair and responsible journalism, but we believe this sort of interference creates an impression of intrusion and interference that is unacceptable, even in the difficult conditions of Iraq today.

2. Attempts to ban words like “jihad” and “resistance” from the reports of Iraqi journalists. We note that according to reports from the BBC monitoring and Iranian media that a representative of the Council’s Media Committee circulated a media behaviour statement urging media to abstain from using such words in their reports of attacks or acts of violence.

We reject this sort of blatant attempt to define what a journalist may or may not write. Professionalism is created by creating a climate of openness and freedom. We believe more efforts must be made to help journalists gain the confidence to work freely and responsibly. More training, dialogue and provision of reliable sources of information are the key to quality journalism – not arbitrary bans on the dictionary that journalists use.

3. An attempt to get journalists to sign up to an 11-point code of conduct for media drafted without proper consultation with journalists. We have been informed that a code is being circulated with a demand that journalists sign up to the document.

But where has this come from and who has prepared it? Ethical matters in journalism are primarily the business of journalists themselves. Only a code

drafted by and agreed by editors, journalists and other media creators can command the confidence of the profession.

Most sincerely we believe that the future of Iraqi journalism depends upon the capacity of Iraqi journalists themselves to exercise control over their professional work. That is why we say this code should be withdrawn.

We raise these concerns at a time when there is growing anger among foreign correspondents and local media over the way journalists are being treated by the occupation authorities. One problem is that media and reporters are often treated as hostile elements in society and face an occupation force that has already developed its own sense of impunity when it comes to dealing with reporters in the field.

In recent days we have heard of numerous cases of media harassment. We received a number of complaints from broadcast media, including a list of incidents from *Al-Jazeera* alone. Additionally, journalists face a massive social crisis following the dismissal of a large number of media staff over the past nine months. We cannot stand aside as the rights of colleagues in Iraq are put under such intolerable pressure.

As it is all journalists work in extremely dangerous conditions, yet precious little has been done to address the crisis of news safety. We are pleased that, on the initiative of the IFJ, this week safety training has been carried out for local journalists and foreign correspondents in Baghdad. Only when the rights of journalists are respected and they work in secure conditions can media play a positive role in building democracy.

We believe there needs to be a new commitment to press freedom and democracy. Journalists need support, not more clumsy attempts to manipulate the media message which appear to support highly controversial political and strategic objectives.”

Our delegation, is examining new initiatives to create a unified national journalists’ movement that will defend social and professional standards.

Media rights and independent journalism must be at the heart of any strategy for democracy and human rights in Iraq, but so far these objectives are largely ignored in favour of political expediency. We believe that approach must change. Because of the importance of these issues we intend to make the contents of this letter public.

Yours Sincerely,

**AIDAN WHITE**  
General Secretary  
International Federation of Journalists

**MAHBOOB ALI**  
Vice President  
Federation of Arab Journalists



## **Journalists Call Global Day of Mourning and Protest Over US “Abject Failure” to Probe Iraq Media Killings**

The International Federation of Journalists has declared April 8th – the anniversary of the attack by United States military on a Baghdad hotel filled with foreign journalists – a day of mourning and protest over the killings of journalists during the Iraq war and the “abject failure” of the Pentagon to adequately explain why journalists died.

Two journalists, Taras Protsyuk working for Reuters and José Couso, a cameraman for the Spanish network Telecinco, were killed in the Palestine Hotel, which was hit the day before Baghdad fell. The attack provoked outrage among journalists and media groups when the US falsely claimed that troops had been fired on from the hotel and later when a secret US investigation cleared the military of any responsibility.

“The attack on the Palestine Hotel was a shameful incident made worse by US misinformation circulated after the event and the failure to take responsibility for this attack,” said Aidan White, IFJ General Secretary. “The families and colleagues of the victims demand justice and a proper explanation about what happened.”

The IFJ’s renewed protest comes as Reuters news agency has criticised the US military’s investigation into the detention and treatment of its staff in Iraq in January this year, and the journalists are strongly backing the agency call for the US to withdraw statements suggesting, without evidence, that combatants posing as journalists had fired on US forces.

“These statements pose a serious threat to journalists everywhere,” said White. “They reflect the sense of impunity that exists within the US military that they can say what they like and do what they like when it comes to dealing with journalists, no matter what the consequences may be for the lives of our colleagues.”

The IFJ has published a detailed report – *Justice Denied on the Road to Baghdad* – outlining dissatisfaction within journalism about the failure of the US to properly investigate incidents in which seven journalists died during the war.

Besides the Palestine Hotel deaths, journalists are raising questions about the deaths of Tareq Ayoub, a journalist killed during a US air-strike on the offices of *Al-Jazeera* in Baghdad; the deaths of British ITN reporter Terry Lloyd and his colleagues Fred Nérac and Hussein Osman, whose bodies are still missing, in a fire fight between US and Iraqi troops near Basra, and the shooting by US soldiers of Reuters cameramen Mazen Dana in August.

The Reuters complaint concerns the maltreatment of two journalists and their driver who were arrested and detained for 72 hours by US troops who mistook them for enemy combatants.

“The US investigation of the mistreatment of Reuters staff was predictably inadequate,”

said White. “It fits in with the pattern of willful disregard of available evidence, a rush to exonerate US soldiers and their commanders, and a complete lack of seriousness over the complaints of journalists and media.”

IFJ leaders are calling on journalists’ groups to protest to US authorities and to their own governments on April 8th. Journalists will also raise the issues of journalists’ safety with the United Nations and make new calls for changes in international law to strengthen the rights of journalists in times of conflict.

“The impact of the US failure to take the rights of media staff seriously is felt around the world,” said White. “It undermines the campaign by press freedom groups to challenge impunity in the treatment of journalists and sends out an appalling signal to governments everywhere that the legitimate right to report freely, even in war zones, can be set aside to suit political and military convenience.”

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