



International Federation of Journalists

Résidence Palace, 155 rue de la Loi (Bloc C), 1040 Brussels

Tel : +32 2 235 22 00 Fax : +32 2 235 22 19 E-mail : ifj@ifj.org

<http://www.ifj.org>

President Barack OBAMA
WHITE HOUSE
Washington D.C.

FAX: 1-202-456 2461

8 April 2009

Dear Mr President,

I write on behalf of the International Federation of Journalists, the world's largest journalists' group, to ask you to address the concerns of journalists around the world over the failure by the United States government to take responsibility for the deaths of journalists and media staff at the hands of US forces in Iraq.

Every year the IFJ has organised with its affiliates worldwide a remembrance day on April 8th to commemorate the attack by US forces on Baghdad's Palestine Hotel, an event that has come to symbolise impunity over attacks on journalists and media staff in Iraq and around the world.

On April 8th 2003, 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 who worked for *Reuters*. Also on the same day, US 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.

Over the years, there have indeed been reports of the killings published by US authorities, but most failed to thoroughly examine the evidence available and instead put its main thrust on exonerating US personnel at all levels of command.

With other press freedom groups such as the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York, we examined the Pentagon's November 2004 report on the attack on the Palestine Hotel only to conclude that it was flawed and unconvincing.

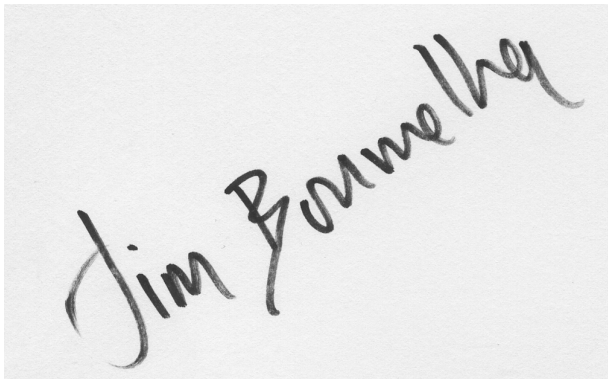
We have also catalogued 16 other cases, listed below, involving journalists and media staff who have died since March 2003 at the hands of US soldiers. In all of these cases, families and friends of the killed journalists continue to wait for credible investigations and honest reports about how and why their loved ones died. They just cannot understand why independent investigations of these incidents were not carried out. But it is not just foreign correspondents that have died, it is Iraqi journalists who have been most prominent among the victims of this war.

This year, we will again be urging our affiliates in 123 countries to organise protests to US authorities in their countries asking them to take responsibility for the deaths of journalists and media staff in Iraq. This time, they will be encouraged by your vision and plans concerning Iraq which have given hope to millions in this country and across the world.

We hope that your administration will review these cases through a convincing process of investigation, involving an exhaustive examination of the relevant evidence, and full disclosure of testimony.

We respectfully request that you honour your commitment to democracy, human rights and justice by ordering a prompt and convincing response to the questions raised over these deaths.

Yours Sincerely,

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Jim Boumelha" in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

Jim Boumelha
PRESIDENT

List of journalists and media workers allegedly killed by US armed forces or US security agencies under US army jurisdiction in Iraq

2003: March – December, seven cases

Telecinco: **Jose Cuoso** (Palestine Hotel, 8 April)
Reuters: **Taras Protsyuk** (Palestine Hotel, 8 April)
Aljazeera: **Tareq Ayoub** (Baghdad, 8 April)
ITN: **Terry Lloyd, Fred Nerac, Hussein Osman** (Basra, 12 March)
Reuters: **Mazen Dana** (Baghdad, 17 August)

2004: Six cases

Al-Arabiya: **Ali-Abdel Azzis** (Baghdad, 18 March)
Ali Al Khatib (Baghdad, 19 March)
freelancer Mazen Al-Tomeizi (Baghdad, 12 September)
Al-Iraqia: **Assad Khadem, Hussein Saleh** (road to Samara, 19 April)
Reuters: **Dhia Najim** (Ramadi, 1 November)

2005: One case

Al-Ittihad Al-Islami: **Dier Ali Karam** (road to Darbandikhan, 12 February).

2007: Five cases

Al-Iraqia: **Nabras Mohamed Hadi** (near the TV HQ, 7 February)
Ashar Abdullah al-Maliki (near the TV HQ, 7 February)
Sabah Salman (near the TV HQ, 7 February)
Reuters: **Namir Noor-Eldeen** (Eastern Baghdad, 12 July)
Sameed Chmagh (Eastern Baghdad, 12 July)