

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Iraq: Allegations of beating of Iraqi journalist must be investigated

Amnesty International today called on the Iraqi authorities to investigate reports that Muntadhar al-Zaidi, the journalist who threw his shoes at US President George W. Bush, has suffered a broken hand and ribs and an injury to the eye after being beaten up by security officials, and has been admitted to hospital.

Some reports also allege that he was hit on the head with a rifle butt.

The incident in which the journalist threw his shoes took place on 14 December when President George W. Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki were giving a press conference in Baghdad, and received worldwide media coverage.

Amnesty International does not condone any act of violence. However, the Iraqi authorities have a duty to investigate all allegations of torture or other ill-treatment of Muntadhar al-Zaidi and to prosecute any persons alleged to be responsible for such abuses. The Iraqi authorities should also disclose his whereabouts, ensure that he is permitted prompt and regular access to legal counsel, his family and to any medical attention he requires, and safeguard him from torture or other ill-treatment.

Background

Muntadhar al-Zaidi is the correspondent of the Cairo-based Iraqi television channel *al-Baghdadia*. He is said to have been abducted by armed groups and detained and questioned by US forces in Iraq. Under Iraqi law (Article 227 of Iraq's Penal Code of 1969) he risks up to two years' imprisonment or a fine for publicly insulting a foreign head of state. On 16 December, his brother, Dargham al-Zaidi, told the BBC that Muntadhar al-Zaidi had suffered a broken hand, broken ribs, internal bleeding, and an eye injury as a result of being beaten after his arrest. He was also said to have been handed over to the judicial authorities.

President George W. Bush was on a visit to Baghdad where he signed the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) on the role and future of US troops in Iraq with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

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