

PRESS RELEASE

ASSASSINATIONS OF IRAQI TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS

The dramatic plight of native Iraqi translators and interpreters working with the American forces in the country was shockingly illustrated to delegates at the World Congress of the International Federation of Translators (FIT) which took place in Tampere, Finland, during the first week in August.

Ten linguists were killed in the Mosul area alone, several of whom were raped beforehand, or subjected to bloodcurdling execution with blunt knives. Translators and interpreters and their families are regularly targeted by terrorists opposed to any form of collaboration with the US forces and with foreigners in general. Even funerals have been threatened. When they have been unable to find their primary victims terrorists have turned their attention on family members, killing or kidnapping them. Other translators have been forced into hiding or exile while some are simply missing. Some of the survivors of attacks have been mutilated for life.

These casualties are in addition to the many interpreters and translators who have been killed and injured in ambushes while working with patrolling troops or with media workers.

The Congress was told that the Society for the Protection of Human Rights of Iraqi Translators has been established for the purpose of publicizing the situation and providing assistance to victims. The society has already aided family members of murder victims but is seriously under-resourced.

It is extremely grave that in a situation in which the declared aim of the American presence in Iraq is to restore democracy and openness the very people who are fundamental for the exchange and diffusion of information are being left unprotected by their employers.

Failure to protect these workers is a grave breach of the rights of workers set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Claims that these interpreters and translators are not US government or military employees but employed by subcontractors such as Titan cannot exonerate the authorities from their responsibility towards them.

FIT urges the American Government and the Iraqi authorities to accept their responsibilities and provide adequate protection for these workers who are making an indispensable contribution towards understanding between the various groups involved in the restoration of democracy in Iraq, and to make appropriate provisions for victims and their families.