

Sir John Chilcot
Chair,
The Iraq Inquiry,
35 Great Smith Street,
London, SW1P 3BQ

30 October 2009

Dear Sir John,

We welcome the establishment of an independent Inquiry into events relating to the UK's engagement in Iraq from 2001-2009.

The UK is a signatory to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1738 which enshrines "the war correspondents' right to the status of prisoners of war under the Third Geneva Convention, that journalists, media professionals and associated personnel engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered civilians, to be respected and protected as such."

Resolution 1738 also urges "all parties involved in situations of armed conflict to respect the professional independence and rights of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel as civilians" while reaffirming that such parties, "bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of affected civilians."

The invasion and subsequent Coalition occupation of and presence in Iraq has witnessed the death of at least 255 journalists and media workers, at least 10 of whom were in the southern provinces controlled by the UK armed forces. In keeping with Security Council Resolution 1738 we would strongly urge the Inquiry to consider how the UK Government and European Union can promote and enact legislation both nationally and internationally for the protection of media workers which reinforces journalists' right to be on the ground to report. Such legislation should include measures against all those who threaten, harass and murder media workers to prevent open and fair reporting. These measures should include independent investigation and bringing to trial such individuals either nationally or before an international court.

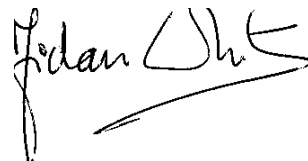
This war has raised concerns over cases of coalition armed forces endangering the lives or safety of journalists through attacks on press buildings and hotels where journalists were known to be staying, as well as incidents of friendly fire on journalists working in the battle theatre. This war has also raised questions, such as the relationship between the armed forces and the media on the battle theatre, the need to work in close collaboration with local Iraq journalists' groups, and the extent to which Iraq now enjoys freedom of expression and freedom of information following the military intervention. Concerns have also been raised among UK journalists and civil rights organisations that the UK's involvement in the Iraq invasion and subsequent events have brought unwelcome and unwarranted new restrictions to the media's work.

We should, of course, be available and willing to provide briefings and evidence to your Committee as necessary.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Alec Boksenberg CBE FRS FInstP
Chair, United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO



Mr Aidan White
General Secretary of the International Federation of
Journalists (IFJ)



Mr Jeremy Dear
General Secretary, National Union of Journalists (NUJ)



Mr Rodney Pinder
Director, International News Safety Institute (INSI)



Mr William Horsley
UK Chairman of the Association of European Journalists
(AEJ), Media Freedom Representative of the International
AEJ



Dr Barbora Bukovska
Senior Director for Law
Article 19: Global Campaign for Free Expression