



London, 8 April 2006

An Appeal from the Gathering in Solidarity with Iraqi Scholars and Academics

After the suffering endured by Iraqis under Saddam Hussein's tyrannical regime and the distress caused by successive wars, undeserved sanctions and the period of occupation, Iraq is now being torn apart by violence and acts of terrorism that encompass many parts of its society. These incidents threaten the unity and the stability of the country. They impede its journey towards democratic change. They prevent Iraqis from enjoying freedom and from making full use of the country's resources. Finally, they hinder Iraq's economic revival, the advancement of its society and the flowering of its culture.

The country is dependant on the resource of its scholars, scientists, doctors and all of its competent professionals, both for its physical rebuilding and for the shaping of its future. However, the destructive forces of terrorism stand in the way of this and prevent Iraq from achieving its rightful ambitions. These forces have embarked on a campaign to scare the scientific community through the assassination of a number of its members. Amongst those who have been killed are scholars, thinkers, academics, doctors, engineers and experts from all other fields. Many others have been threatened and forced into exile. Those who are abroad have been prevented from returning to their country.

The lives and families of many scholars and academics have been endangered by the lack of security and by the widespread disturbances, brought about by civil discord, terrorist attacks and racial and sectarian pride. The failure to set up a government administration that is able to ensure peace and maintain security has affected scholars and academics from various races, religions, sects and political persuasions, making them the victims of extremism, revenge attacks, organised gangs, assassinations and kidnappings. The situation has deteriorated to the point that it involves a number of universities, leading to the disruption of

university life and the derailment of education. The staffs of these universities have been prevented from carrying out their activities and their educational work.

We, the academics and scholars of Iraq, along with a number of prominent Iraqis and with the invitation of the Iraq Higher Education Organising Committee, the Imam Al-Khoei Foundation, and the Association of Iraqi Academics in the UK, in our meeting in London, stand today in humble reverence and in admiration of the memory of the noble scholars, thinkers and academics from all fields, that have been lost. These men have been killed at the hands of criminals and terrorists, who have prevented them from working towards the rebuilding and the prosperity of our beloved country. In this, our appeal, we draw attention to the dangers facing Iraq and we demand from the Iraqi government and from all the organisations of civil society, as well as from all noble and honourable people, that they strive to meet the following requests:

1. That those in power in Iraq resolve to take up their responsibility; that they take steps to prevent these dangers, offering the necessary protection to academics and scholars, in order to preserve their lives and their honour; that they charge the legal system with the criminal investigation of these crimes; seeking out the groups and individuals that are responsible and bringing them to justice.
2. That the Iraqi government and those responsible within the universities take the speediest of measures in order to offer protection to all members of the educational authorities and their families, such as offering the necessary accommodation in the restricted university area, as well as the guarantee of protection in all forms that may be necessary to them.
3. That those responsible within the Iraqi government, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the universities act to preserve the sanctity of universities and to prevent the intrusion of political parties and religious groups from affecting the functioning of the academic establishments.
4. That the political and religious parties and organisations respect the sanctity of the universities and do not use them as platforms for their propaganda, their activities and their political and religious rivalries.
5. That universities must be accorded the status of "safe sanctuaries" and that the security services and the army undertake to abide by this, in accordance with the fact that the security of academics is part of the security situation in Iraq.
6. That the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research take special guardianship of the children and families of the academics that have been killed, accord them their rightful pension rights and facilitate their education.

7. That universities in the US and UK, along with the other European states and all other countries, strive to make spaces available for members of the Iraqi education community who wish to take sabbaticals. Iraqi institutions and their counterparts abroad should give the necessary assistance, financial and otherwise, in this regard.
8. That a principle of national unity be established, superseding all differences; that the motives for division and schism be removed and that the necessity of democratic principles and human rights should be established.
9. That academic freedoms be guaranteed, along with the strengthening of the right of university professors to express their scientific opinion within the sanctity of a university. Work should be done to legislate for the guaranteed freedom of research and thought and expression in the academic institutions.
10. That Iraqi academics abroad, by means of their institutions, organise a campaign that undertakes to:
 - a. Call attention to the suffering of scholars and academics in Iraq, mobilising universities and scientific centres the world over to join them in combating the violence and terrorism which they suffer.
 - b. Request from UNESCO and the international, Arab and Islamic organisations that they take the necessary measures to protect Iraq's precious resource of scholars and academics and that they help them to overcome this ordeal.

These recommendations were agreed upon in a meeting in the Imam Al-Khoei Foundation in London on April 8th 2006, with over 70 academics in attendance from various parts of the UK and Eire. To contact the organising committee, please write to Dr Abbas Al-Hussaini at alhussa@wmin.ac.uk.