

ICSU Condemns Violence against Scientists in Iraq¹

In the light of a number of recent incidents and press reports², the International Council for Science (ICSU) expresses its solidarity with the Iraqi scientific community. ICSU unreservedly opposes any discrimination against scientists or in the conduct of science. This is encapsulated in the Principle of the Universality of Science – science should be equitable and without discrimination (ICSU Statute 5) - which is embraced by the global community of scientists³.

The recent reports of events in Iraq indicate that the academic and scientific communities are being specifically targeted for violence. It is clear that many scientists have been ruthlessly tortured and killed. These include Professor Wissam Al-Hashimi, a former vice-President of the International Union of Geological Sciences, who was very active and popular within the international science community. In August 2005, he was intercepted on his way to work, tortured and shot twice in the head. His murder, and that of other scientists, is not only a personal tragedy but also a senseless loss to a national community that will one day soon have to turn its mind to re-building after the ravages of war.

Many brave scientists continue to work within Iraq or collaborate with their former colleagues from positions of exile. Other members of the international science community are doing what they can to assist. Science is a global enterprise and its values and principles are what holds it together, particularly in times of hardship. When these principles are undermined and scientists are discriminated against it is the global scientific enterprise and society as a whole that suffers.

ICSU unequivocally opposes any discrimination against Iraqi scientists, whether that be for political, religious or any other reason, and calls on all relevant authorities to ensure that Iraqi scientists are properly respected and protected.

¹ This statement is endorsed by the Officers of the International Council for Science (July, 2006).

² See Nature, 441, p1036-1037; Science, 312, p 1857; and, <http://www.scidev.net/content/news/eng/hit-list-names-hundreds-of-iraqi-scientists.cfm>.

³ ICSU has 107 National Members, including Iraq, and 29 International Scientific Unions, representing different disciplines. Acceptance of Statute 5, the Principle of Universality, is a condition of ICSU Membership. See www.icsu.org for further information.