

Call for action to save Iraq's Academics

By [BRussells Tribunal](#)

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In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

URGENT APPEAL TO SAVE IRAQ'S ACADEMICS.

A little known aspect of the tragedy engulfing Iraq is the systematic liquidation of the country's academics. Even according to conservative estimates, over 250 educators have been assassinated, and many hundreds more have disappeared. With thousands fleeing the country in fear for their lives, not only is Iraq undergoing a major brain drain, the secular middle class ? which has refused to be co-opted by the US occupation ? is being decimated, with far-reaching consequences for the future of Iraq.

Already on July 14, 2004, veteran correspondent Robert Fisk reported from Iraq that: "University staff suspect that there is a campaign to strip Iraq of its academics, to complete the destruction of Iraq's cultural identity which began when the American army entered Baghdad."

The wave of assassinations appears non-partisan and non-sectarian, targeting women as well as men, and is countrywide. It is indiscriminate of expertise: professors of geography, history and Arabic literature as well as science are among the dead. Not one individual has been apprehended in connection with these assassinations.

According to the United Nations University, some 84 per cent of Iraq's institutions of higher education have already been burnt, looted or destroyed. Iraq's educational system used to be among the best in the region; one of the country's most important assets was its well-educated people.

This situation is a mirror of the occupation as a whole: a catastrophe of staggering proportions unfolding in a climate of criminal disregard. As an occupying power, and under international humanitarian law, final responsibility for protecting Iraqi citizens, including academics, lies with the United States.

With this petition we want to break the silence.

1. We appeal to organisations which work to enforce or defend international humanitarian law to put these crimes on the agenda.

2. We request that an independent international investigation be launched immediately to probe these extrajudicial killings. This investigation should also examine the issue of responsibility to clearly identify who is accountable for this state of affairs. We appeal to the special rapporteur on summary executions at UNHCHR in Geneva.

You can sign this petition by clicking:

This petition was launched by the BRussells Tribunal and is already endorsed

by CEOSI (Spain), the Portuguese hearing of the WTI, Iraktribunal.de (Germany), the Swedish Antiwar committee, the IAC (USA), the International Association of Middle East Studies (IAMES), the German Middle East Studies Association (DAVO) and the European Association for Middle Eastern Studies (EURAMES), and [several personalities](#), like Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, John Pilger and Michael Parenti.

See also the call for action underneath and more information on www.brusselstribunal.org/Academics.htm

Call for action to save Iraq's Academics

1. We call upon all people, especially academics and students, to help end the silence that surrounds the ongoing crime of the assassination of Iraqi academics and the destruction of Iraqi's educational infrastructure, and support Iraqi academics' right and hope to live in an independent, democratic Iraq, free of foreign occupation and hegemony.

2. We urge that academic institutions and organisations declare solidarity with their Iraqi colleagues.

3. We urge that academics forge links between Iraqi educators, both in exile and in Iraq, and universities worldwide.

4. We urge that student organisations link with Iraqi student organisations.

5. We urge that educators mobilise colleagues and concerned citizens to take up the cause of the salvation of Iraq's intellectual wealth, by organising seminars, teach-ins and forums on the plight of Iraq's academics.

The world's academics and intellectuals must act now to save the lives of their colleagues in Iraq.

[The BRussells Tribunal, in cooperation with other organisations, has started to build a network of contacts and raise public awareness and can provide information and support to individuals and groups who wish to mobilise on this issue. We are able to act as a depository and hub for this campaign]

<http://www.brusselstribunal.org/Academics.htm>

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