

Iraqi journalist seized by US troops while investigating corruption

By Mike Ingram
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Award winning journalist Ali Fadhil was subjected to a terrifying ordeal on Sunday, January 8 as US troops blasted their way into his Baghdad home, firing bullets into the bedroom where he was sleeping.

The incident was reported by the *Guardian* newspaper in Britain on Monday and has been noticeably absent from other news sources, not least those within the United States. Fadhil is working for Guardian Films on an investigation for Britain's Channel 4's "Dispatches" program into claims that tens of millions of dollars in Iraqi funds held by the Americans and the British have been misused or misappropriated.

The occupying troops claimed to be searching for an Iraqi insurgent. Fadhil has said that US forces stormed his home in Baghdad while he was sleeping with his wife, their three-year-old daughter and seven-month-old son in the same room.

"They fired into the bedroom where we were sleeping, then three soldiers came in. They rolled me on to the floor and tied my hands. When I tried to ask them what they were looking for they just told me to shut up," Fadhil said.

Fadhil, who is best known for his documentary film on the aftermath of the Fallujah massacre, won the Foreign Press Association young journalist of the year award last year. He was hooded and taken away for questioning by US soldiers, and released hours later.

The director of the film Fadhil is working on, Callum Macrae, told the *Guardian*, "The timing and nature of this raid is extremely disturbing. It is only a few days since we first approached the US authorities and told them Ali was doing this investigation, and asked them then to grant him an interview about our findings.

"We need a convincing assurance from the American authorities that this terrifying experience was not

harassment and a crude attempt to discourage Ali's investigation."

Whether or not Macrae's request for "convincing assurance" is met, his suspicions are entirely justified when judged against past practices of the occupation forces in Iraq.

In September of last year, Waleed Khaled, a 28-year-old Reuters Television soundman, became the eighteenth journalist or media worker killed in Iraq by fire from US occupation forces.

Khaled received a bullet to the head and at least four to the chest in what Iraqi colleagues arriving at the scene later identified as shots coming from an American sniper on the roof of a shopping center.

On June 24, 2005, Iraqi Yasser Salihee, a special correspondent for the Knight Ridder news agency, was killed by a single shot to the head as he approached a checkpoint that had been thrown up near his home in western Baghdad by US and Iraqi troops. It is believed that the shot was fired by an American sniper. According to eyewitnesses at the time, no warning shots were fired.

While Knight Ridder declared that there was "no reason to think that the shooting had anything to do with his reporting work," Salihee had been gathering evidence over the month prior to his shooting that US-backed Iraqi forces had been carrying out extra-judicial killings of alleged members and supporters of the anti-occupation resistance. His investigation followed a feature in the *New York Times* magazine in May 2005 detailing how the US military had modeled the Iraqi interior ministry police commandos, known as the Wolf Brigade, on the death squads unleashed in the 1980s to crush the left-wing insurgency in El Salvador.

Other media workers reported killed last year

include:

* Maha Ibrahim, Baghdad TV, June 25, Baghdad:

A news producer for the Iraqi television station Baghdad TV, Ibrahim was shot by US forces as she drove to work with her husband, a fellow employee. Staff at the Baghdad TV station said Ibrahim's car was hit as US troops attempted to disperse a crowd from a Baghdad road. Ibrahim was wounded in the abdomen and died on arrival at a local hospital. Her husband survived the shooting.

* Ahmed Wael Bakri, Al-Sharqiyah, June 28, Baghdad:

Bakri was a director and news producer for the local television station, Al-Sharqiyah. He was killed by gunfire as he approached US troops, according to Ali Hanoon, a station director. Hanoon said that Bakri was driving from work to his in-laws' home in southern Baghdad at the time of the shooting. US soldiers fired at the car 15 times, and Bakri died later at Yarmouk Hospital. The Associated Press cited a colleague and a doctor who treated the journalist, reporting that Bakri failed to pull over for a US convoy while trying to pass a traffic accident.

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