

DECLARATION REGARDING THE WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE IN IRAQ AND THE KILLING OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

Declaration approved at the General Assembly of the Conference of Spanish University Rectors (CRUE) held on November 14, 2006.

Iraq suffers from a terrible situation of indiscriminate and widespread violence which grows daily and affects each and every sector of society. Together with the collapse of the basic necessities to sustain the population, this extremely grave spiral of terror is fomenting a process of internal decomposition that places Iraqi society on the brink of definitive collapse. Iraq, a country rooted in its millennia-long history of enriching the livelihoods of the communities that comprised it, today faces actual disappearance in an explosion of sectarian violence. Of particular consequence to the future of the country are the systematic assassinations of university professors.

The Director General of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, condemned in April of this year the killings of Iraqi professors since the beginning of the occupation of the country in April 2003 (*Press Release*, n. 2006-31). In October 2005, the Iraqi Minister of Higher Education acknowledged the killing of 146 university professors during this time. In actuality, the number of Iraqi professors killed is more than 210, according to a variety of reliable sources, among them, the Association of University Professors of Iraq. At least 13 professors have been killed since the beginning of the new academic year, among them, on October 30, 2006, Isam al-Rawi, professor of Geology at the University of Baghdad and president of the Association of University Professors of Iraq.

A review of the available list of assassinated professors allows the magnitude of the problem to be understood: professors from all the country's universities, belonging to all academic specialties are being killed, with the majority of those killed being highly qualified figures in their field, heads of departments, and members of new, democratically-elected university bodies.

In addition to this systematic campaign of the killing of professors, for the first time two car-bombs exploded on April 24 at Mustansiriya University in Baghdad, causing the death of five students.

Taking into consideration these facts, the Conference of Spanish University Rectors RESOLVES:

1. To express its extreme dismay and forceful denunciation of the terrible and widespread violence that Iraqi society suffers from, and in particular that which affects Iraqi professors, a very grave attack on the future cultural and scientific development of the country, and is set to cause the mass exit of professors out of the country and the collapse of the university system.
2. To promote in appropriate international forums the reporting of these facts and the adoption of concrete means for the collective protection of Iraqi professors, in particular, UNESCO, International Federation of Universities and the Association of Arab Universities within the framework of the Arab League.

3. To direct the Spanish government to urge the Iraqi authorities and those countries with military forces deployed in Iraq to fulfill their obligations relating to the protection of Iraq citizens, in this case in particular the collective safety of professors, and to investigate the campaign of assassinations against professors.