

American freelance journalist kidnapped in Iraq

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The kidnapping and threatened execution of American journalist Jill Carroll is a reactionary act that will do nothing to advance the struggle against the American occupation of Iraq. Like previous kidnappings and executions carried out by some groups in Iraq, the killing of Carroll will serve only as a further pretext for the US military to continue the occupation and escalate the repression of the Iraqi people.

Carroll, a 28-year-old freelance journalist working for the *Christian Science Monitor*, was captured Saturday by a group calling itself the Revenge Brigade. On Wednesday, the group released a video showing the journalist and including a demand that US forces release all women prisoners within 72 hours or she would be killed. The deadline is set to expire some time on Friday.

Carroll bears no responsibility for the policies of the Bush administration and the American military. By all accounts, she has been among the more critical and thoughtful American journalists reporting from Iraq, eschewing the common practice of remaining confined to the Green Zone and operating under US military protection. She is fluent in Arabic and has written on developments in the Middle East for over three years.

In her coverage from Iraq she has at times sought to highlight the enormous devastation the war has inflicted upon the Iraqi people. Her attempt to go outside the strictly controlled confines of what passes for US media coverage of the occupation of Iraq was what made her vulnerable. She was kidnapped after attempting to interview a Sunni politician in a region of Baghdad in which opposition to the US military is well entrenched.

On Thursday Carroll's mother, Mary Beth Carroll, read a statement to CNN in which she appealed to the kidnappers "to release this young woman who has

worked so hard to show the suffering of Iraqis to the world.... They've picked the wrong person ... if they're looking for someone who is an enemy of Iraq," she said.

Organizations throughout the US and internationally also called for her release on Thursday, including several Arabic and Iraqi groups. A coalition of Egyptian human rights organizations said, "The American freelance journalist is known for her extreme sympathy towards the Iraqi people and opposition to their suffering since the outbreak of the war and the invasion of Iraq." Groups within the United States, including the Council on American-Islamic Relations, also called for her release.

As usual in such instances, information on the nature of the organization that has kidnapped Carroll is extremely murky. Little is known about the Revenge Brigade's origins, and there remains the possibility that it has some ties to occupation forces. What can be said is that the kidnapping and possible execution of Carroll will only play into the hands of the US military. It will be used in an attempt to disorient the American people and divert mounting opposition to the policies of the government, both abroad and within the United States.

As the 72-hour deadline set by the kidnappers nears, the Bush administration is demonstrating once again its indifference to the lives of those caught up in the war in Iraq. With the US government standing by, Carroll is set to become one more casualty of the chaos produced by the American invasion. Indeed, the administration is pursuing a policy in relation to Carroll that will increase the likelihood of her execution at the hands of her captors.

According to US officials, only eight women are presently in the custody of US forces. An unnamed official of the Human Rights Ministry of the US-

backed Iraqi government said on Wednesday that six of these prisoners had recently been recommended for release, and only awaited the approval of the US military and the Iraqi Ministry of Justice.

On Thursday, however, the Pentagon was quick to deny that the release of any of the women prisoners was imminent. Military spokesman Joe Carpenter told Reuters, “There is no expected resolution of their cases in the near future.” With complete disregard for the life of the American journalist, Carpenter declared, “There is no accelerated process with regards to the women and how it relates to the kidnapped journalist in question.”

Carpenter’s remarks are in line with the contempt the US government has demonstrated for the lives of journalists who are covering the war in Iraq—particularly those, like Carroll, who have maintained a certain degree of objectivity in their reports. Large numbers of journalists have been killed over the past three years. On a number of occasions, journalists have been the target of US military actions, including the shelling in 2003 of the Palestine Hotel, where hundreds of foreign journalists were staying.

In the latest instance of violence against journalists, Iraqi journalist Muhammad Mahmud Kawa was injured when he was fired on by American soldiers on Wednesday.

The American ruling class, which has launched the war and is determined to continue the occupation, has no care or sympathy for the lives of people like Carroll. In the pursuit of the geopolitical interests of American capitalism, they will willingly sacrifice her life as they have the lives of thousands of American soldiers and tens of thousands of Iraqis.

The actions of Carroll’s kidnappers must be condemned. They will only serve to work against the development of a genuine international opposition to American imperialism, which has wreaked such devastation on the lives of Iraqis and Americans alike.



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