

Iraqi Shoe-Thrower 'Tortured Behind Bars'

Remember the Iraqi reporter who hurled his shoes at then US president George Bush. Well, he has been released from prison - amid claims he was tortured behind bars. Muntazer al Zeidi's act of defiance in December last year summed up the feelings of many Iraqis towards the former US leader.

The little-known reporter gained instant hero status in the Arab world over the attack at a news conference in Baghdad.

Zeidi, speaking after his release from jail, called Mr Bush a "war criminal" who "destroyed my country" and said the shoe throwing was "just expressing what I was feeling".

The reporter also claimed he was abused after his arrest, insisting he was beaten with iron bars, whipped with cords and endured electric shocks.

He went on that his guards also subjected him to simulated drowning sessions, using a technique called water-boarding.

Zeidi promised to reveal the names of senior officials in the Iraqi government and army who he said were involved in mistreating him.

The reporter added that he now fears for his life and believes US intelligence agents will chase after him.

During the shoe attack, Mr Bush, standing next to Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki, had been forced to duck as the footwear flew past his head.

Millions of people across the world saw online or TV footage of Zeidi hurling the shoes and calling the former president a "dog", both insults in the Middle East.

It caused huge embarrassment to Mr Bush and the Iraqi PM. But many viewers, including in the US, applauded his bravery.

Venezuela's anti-American President Hugo Chavez called Zeidi courageous.

Fathers from other Arab nations have offered the reporter their daughters as brides.

The attack also led to an online game called Sock and Awe, which involves firing footwear at Mr Bush's bobbing head - more than 98,583,000 shoes have hit the target.

Zeidi was jailed for three years for assaulting a visiting head of state, but his sentence was later reduced to one year. - news.sky.com