

**Press Release****June 20, 2007****World Taekwondo Federation**

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**WTF Offers Condolences to Murdered Iraqi Taekwondo Athletes**

Dr. Chungwon Choue, president of the World Taekwondo Federation, expressed his shock and sadness on learning that the remains of 13 Iraqi taekwondo athletes, who were kidnapped in May 2006, were found last week in Iraq.

“On behalf of the global taekwondo family, I send my deepest condolences to the victims and their family members,” WTF President Choue said in his letter dated on June 18, 2007, to Mr. Alaa Sharhan Zubon, new president of the Iraqi Taekwondo Federation.

Dr. Choue said that the World Taekwondo Federation strongly condemns kidnapping of athletes and any act of international terrorism as a threat to international peace and security, and also to the Olympic Movement and development of the sport of taekwondo. “Such acts should not be tolerated for any reason.”

“Together with the global taekwondo family, I pray that the new Iraqi Taekwondo Federation will overcome adversity through the everlasting propagation of the Olympic Movement in Iraq,” Dr. Choue said. “The WTF will continue to combat all forms of violations against human rights and the Olympic Movement through the sport of taekwondo.”

Dr. Choue expressed his appreciation to the Iraqi Taekwondo Federation for its dispatching of national players, despite such difficulties, to the 2007 Beijing WTF World Taekwondo Championships, which were held in Beijing on May 18-22, 2007. “Such courage is truly inspiring, and necessary, in the face of adversity.”

On June 18, the Iraqi Taekwondo Federation informed the WTF that the bodies of kidnapped Iraqi taekwondo team were found after more than a year’s search.

According to the federation, a total of 15 members of the Iraqi national youth

team were kidnapped in May 2006 as they were traveling by bus through the Anbar desert on their way to Jordan to attend a training course. The bodies of at least 13 members of the team were found on June 14, 2007, in the desert about 100km west of Ramadi in Anbar province.

In a separate case, on July 15, 2006, Mr. Jamal Abdul Kareem, former president of the Iraqi Taekwondo Federation, was kidnapped by unknown armed forces, together with Mr. Ahmed Al-Hijiya, former president of the Iraqi Olympic Committee, and Mr. Amir Jabbar, former secretary general of the Iraqi NOC. The two Iraqi NOC leaders were found dead a few days after the kidnapping, and Mr. Kareem's remains were found this year.

On July 25, 2006, the WTF adopted a resolution on Iraq during the WTF General Assembly in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

“Reaffirming the purposes and principles of the Charter of the International Olympic Committee and its relevant by-laws, in particular the articles on core Olympic values and the propagation of the Olympic Movement, the WTF condemns in the strongest terms the kidnapping of taekwondo officials and athletes from the pertinent member national associations of the WTF and National Olympic Committee; and in some cases, the assassination of officials and athletes of other international sports federations; in Iraq between May and July 2006; in which innocent lives were claimed,” the resolution said.

The resolution continued, “The WTF urges the need for all parties to work together urgently and to cooperate with and provide support and assistance, where appropriate, to the Iraqi authorities in their efforts to obtain the safe release of the kidnapped and to bring justice to the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks.” “The WTF expresses its reinforced determination to combat all forms of violations against human rights and the Olympic Movement through the sport of taekwondo.”