

Iraq denounces Trump's pardon of Blackwater guards

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Baghdad, December 24 (RHC)-- Iraq's government and the Hezbollah Brigades have denounced a decision by U.S. President Donald Trump to pardon Blackwater contractors jailed for the killing of unarmed Iraqi civilians in Baghdad.

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that the "seriousness of the committed crimes" had been ignored by the White House and was in contradiction to the Trump administration's declared 'commitment' to human rights, justice and the rule of law. The pardon, the statement added, did not take into account the "dignity of the victims and the feelings and rights of their relatives." Baghdad will urge Washington to reconsider the decision through diplomatic channels, the statement said.

On Tuesday, Trump issued pardons for four guards from the notorious US mercenary firm Blackwater who were serving jail sentences for killing 14 civilians in Baghdad's crowded Nisour Square in 2007, a tragic incident that caused international uproar over the use of private contractors in war zones.

The four security guards -- Paul Slough, Evan Liberty, Dustin Heard and Nicholas Slatten -- worked for the now-defunct Blackwater Worldwide security firm, which had been contracted by the U.S. State Department to provide protection for American diplomats in Iraq.

In another statement issued on Wednesday, the resistance group Hezbollah Brigades said the pardon was “an unfair arbitrary action.” The Brigades stressed the necessity of exerting serious efforts in order to drive the US forces out of Iraq to stop the recurrence of crimes against the Iraqi people. The group also called for “activating judicial procedures” to that end.

Meanwhile, the Arabic-language al-Sumaria television network cited a security source as saying that a logistics convoy of the U.S.-led coalition had been targeted by a roadside bomb on Hawalli highway, south of the capital Baghdad, on Wednesday. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

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