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AP News

Iraqi shoe thrower says he would do it again

In Swiss TV interview, Iraqi shoe thrower says he would do it again even if it cost his life

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The Iraqi journalist who threw his shoes at President George W. Bush said Wednesday he has no regrets and would carry out his brazen protest again, even if it cost him his life.

Muntadhar al-Zeidi told Swiss television station Leman Bleu that, after being mistreated in Iraqi custody for two days following his outburst last Dec. 14, a judge asked him whether he regretted the gesture.

"I told the judge only one thing: if the hands of the clock could go back I would do the same act even if it cost my life," al-Zeidi said, speaking through a translator.

Al-Zeidi, a TV reporter, became a hero for many in and outside Iraq angered by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq when, at a press conference in Baghdad, he hurled his shoes at Bush, shouting "this is your farewell kiss, you dog!" and "this is from the widows, the orphans and those who were killed in Iraq."

Bush's term in office expired the following month.

"I knew I was doing something that would put my life in danger, and I was sure of that, but I wasn't afraid," he told Leman Bleu during the live interview.

Al-Zeidi was wrestled to the ground by security guards. He claims he was tortured during his nine months in prison.

After his release last month he obtained a tourist visa for Switzerland with the help of a Geneva lawyer. He arrived in the country Tuesday to seek medical treatment and to promote a new human rights group for Iraqi civilians.

"I wanted to create this foundation to help my people, the Iraqis, after all they have suffered," he said. "The aim is to help the five million orphans, the one million widows and three million handicapped."

His lawyer, Mauro Poggia, said an earlier plan to apply for asylum in Switzerland was canceled.