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Nobel Prize winner brands Bush, Blair war criminals

Playwright Harold Pinter has launched a fierce critique of the Iraq War, branding the US President and British Prime Minister war criminals in his lecture as winner of this year's Nobel Prize for Literature.

Pinter has demanded George Bush and Tony Blair be prosecuted under international law in the lecture.

"The invasion of Iraq was a bandit act, an act of blatant state terrorism, demonstrating absolute contempt for the concept of international law," he said.

The lecture was pre-recorded in London because Pinter was too sick to travel to Sweden.

"How many people do you have to kill before you qualify to be described as a mass murderer and a war criminal?" Pinter asked.

"One hundred thousand? More than enough, I would have thought.

"Therefore, it is just that Bush and Blair be arraigned before the International Criminal Court of Justice."

Political 'hypnosis'

Pinter used nearly all of his nearly hour-long lecture to criticise the US.

"The United States supported and in many cases engendered every right-wing military dictatorship in the world after the end of the Second World War," he said.

"I refer to Indonesia, Greece, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Haiti, Turkey, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, and, of course, Chile.

"The crimes of the United States have been systematic, constant, vicious, remorseless, but very few people have actually talked about them.

"You have to hand it to America.

"It has exercised a quite clinical manipulation of power worldwide while masquerading as a force of universal good.

"It's a brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis."

Power over truth

Pinter's criticism of Washington is nothing new - he has recently changed his focus from plays to political activism.

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In his lecture, he emphasised the difference between the separate worlds of literature and political life.

He said in literature, "a thing is not necessarily either true or false. It can be both true and false," adding however that "as a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false".

Politicians are not interested "in truth but in power and in the maintenance of that power," he said.

"The justification for the invasion of Iraq was that Saddam Hussein possessed a highly dangerous body of weapons of mass destruction. It was not true," he said.

"We were told that Iraq had a relationship with Al Qaeda and shared responsibility for the atrocity in New York of September 11, 2001. It was not true."

Pinter won the 2005 Nobel Prize for his plays, which according to the Nobel jury uncover "the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression's closed rooms".

His masterpieces include *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*.

The 75-year-old British playwright was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer in December 2002.

- AFP

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