

Three separate shooting attacks in Baghdad killed two construction workers and wounded three, seriously wounded a newspaper editor, and hit a car carrying cabinet adviser Ghazi Abdul Mahdi to work, a source here said today.

On Sunday night, the corpses of three handcuffed and blindfolded Iraqis were found on the Iraq capital, and police said they had shot and the brother of a politician shot.

These latest deaths came as a new Pentagon report estimated that 26,000 Iraqis were killed and wounded in a year of attacks, mostly in 2004. In the most recent period, from Aug. 29 to Sept. 16, there were an estimated 64 Iraqi casualties each day. According to the report, Iraqi civilians and security forces were killed and wounded at a rate of about 100 a day in 2004 and at a rate of about 40 a day later that year. The rate increased in 2005 to about 100 a day, and by the end of August it had jumped to about 120 a day.

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Journalists blackmailed by Israeli embassy in Mauritania

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A recent report in a Saudi newspaper has claimed that Israel's embassy in Mauritania is operating under directives from the Israeli secret security agency, the Mossad, in an attempt to recruit Mauritanian agents to work for Israel, using blackmail and other threats.



According to the Saudi *al Watan* newspaper, Israel's [ambassador](#) to Mauritania, Boaz Bismut, was instructed to apply pressure on local Mauritanian journalists to provide information and work towards changing Mauritanian [public opinion](#) regarding Israel. Before his diplomatic career, Bismut was a journalist in Israel's *Yediot Ahronoth* newspaper.

Bismut was quoted as saying, "The Mauritanian nation will not accept normalization with Israel unless Mauritanian journalists do so first."

To do so, the Saudi paper said, Israel had applied pressure to coerce Mauritanian journalists into undertaking the task of changing local public opinion about Israeli-Mauritanian relations.

Journalists were reportedly lured with tempting offers, including sexual relations with foreign women, bribe money, and promises of support in securing prominent job positions in return for their help in the Israeli endeavor.

The newspaper even revealed the whereabouts of three luxury apartments used by Mauritanian journalists for secret rendezvous with the foreign women. Unbeknownst to the journalists, the sexual encounters were then recorded, later to be used to blackmail them by the Israeli [embassy](#).



The Saudi paper explained that the Israeli ambassador would later approach the journalists, threatening to release the videotapes if they did not cooperate with Israel.

Bismut was also reportedly interested in finding out which Mauritanian politician held the most popularity locally, so that he could be recruited for Israel's undercover public relations effort.

The accusations were reportedly confirmed by several Mauritanian journalists with whom the paper spoke that claimed to have fallen into the Israeli trap. In the past, the journalists said, Bismut had also offered journalists huge sums of money to gain their favor.

Ever since the opening of the Israeli embassy in the Mauritanian capital of Nouakchott, many have called for its closure.

Mauritania, a member of the Arab League, had close ties with Israel under former leader, Maaouya Sid'Ahmed Taya, who was overthrown in a 2005 coup. Taya's warm relations with Israel angered many and alienated Muslim countries worldwide.

Following the 2005 coup, Bismut told reporters, according to *Al Jazeera*, "This is an Arab league country that was by our side through the Intifada." "Clearly, there are those who are not interested in this connection," he added, "But the connection with the government, the president and the Mauritanian people is very important."

According to *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, the United States in 1993 put pressure on Mauritania "to normalize relations with Israel and accept the Middle East peace process."

Mauritania later became the only Arab state not to withdraw its ambassador from Israel after the eruption of the Al Aqsa Intifadah.

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