

Northern Friends Peace Bulletin



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Dear Friends,

This issue of the Bulletin inevitably covers issues relating to the threat of war with Iraq. What we have attempted to do here is simply to pick out some of the key points being made by some Quaker and other religious bodies. We hope this is helpful. If you would like a more detailed briefing we recommend that produced by and available from Quaker Peace and Social Witness. Contact David Gee on davidg@quaker.org.uk or 020 7663 1067.

Posters and stickers: We have available a simple A4 poster (2 first class stamps and downloadable from our web site) and a mini sticker (in sheets of 65 for - also for two first class stamps) with the wording "Seek Peace Say no to War".

Please do keep in touch with news and information of your activities; we will do what we can to support you, but please be patient as we have a busy autumn ahead. If you have access to the internet, keep an eye on our news and action pages, and also on the peace action pages now available on the Britain Yearly Meeting site.

In peace, ***Philip Austin, Co-ordinator***

From Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW)

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/peace/briefs/iraq.html>

If the West and Arab nations can set their own regional interests aside and grasp the deeper human dimension of the challenge of Iraq, talk of war could give way to a concerted international approach that places the needs of the Iraqi people uppermost.

The economic sanctions could be lifted to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people immediately and enable them to rebuild their economy, while a substantial UN aid programme for ordinary Iraqis is sought. An arms embargo should remain, as could sanctions aimed at the Iraqi leadership's foreign assets and privileges. However, negotiations with Iraq could resume under the auspices of the UN Security Council – the good offices of Secretary-General Kofi Annan are well suited to this purpose. Multilateral negotiations for regional arms control, peace and security could be proposed and supported. The Iraqi offer conditionally to permit weapons inspectors in Iraq should form the basis of negotiations to that end, whilst nuclear powers Britain, Israel and the US need to make demonstrable progress towards nuclear disarmament if they expect Iraq to do the same. Ideally, Britain and the US could publicly recognise the harm to Iraq from their past policies. They could also make an explicit commitment to work with the Iraqi people, Arab nations and the UN for a future transition to democracy.

The nonviolent approach is not straightforward – there is no blueprint for a just and peaceful Iraq – but an approach of this kind would attract widespread international support and it is worth noting that historically, Saddam Hussein has usually given way when international opinion has stood against him. Arab and European nations, including Britain, could speak out against war and for a coherent alternative on this basis.

Ecumenical Statement, presented to 10 Downing Street in August 2002

<http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/documents1.htm#declaration>

Concluding paragraph:

It is our considered view that an attack on Iraq would be both immoral and illegal, and that eradicating the dangers posed by malevolent dictators and terrorists can be achieved only by tackling the root causes of the disputes themselves. It is deplorable that the world's most powerful nations continue to regard war and the threat of war as an acceptable instrument of foreign policy, in violation of the ethos of both the United Nations and Christian moral teaching. The way to peace does not lie through war but through the transformation of structures of injustice and of the politics of exclusion, and that is the cause to which the West should be devoting its technological, diplomatic and economic resources.

From Friends Committee on National Legislation (US)

<http://www.fcni.org/issues/int/iraindx.htm>

What should Congress and the U.S. do instead of pre-emptive, unilateral U.S. covert or military action to topple Saddam Hussein's regime?

- Congress should hold fair and balanced hearings on U.S.-Iraq relations and policy options. Hearings should address issues such as the true extent of threat posed by Saddam Hussein to U.S. security, whether the current policy will advance or delay progress toward peace and security in Iraq and the region, humanitarian conditions inside Iraq, the role of the U.S. and the UN in contributing to and alleviating the humanitarian crisis, and how human rights, democracy, and the rule of law might be advanced in Iraq.
 - The U.S. should support the return of UN weapons inspectors to Iraq to objectively assess the status of Iraq's WMD. The inspections must be fair. Inspections should not be used as a pretext or intelligence gathering for U.S. military attacks as they were previously.
 - The U.S. should work with the UN Security Council to end economic sanctions. Trade and investment in civilian sector goods and services must resume so as to restore the health, well-being, and dignity of Iraq's people, who now depend on meagre handouts from the UN "oil-for-food" program and the black market controlled by Saddam's regime.
 - The U.S. must engage actively with the Israelis and Palestinians to help bring about a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Saddam has exploited and encouraged this violent conflict for his own political advantage against the U.S. throughout the Arab world.
 - The U.S. should work with the international community to maintain and strengthen the international embargo on weapons sales to Iraq and to expand this embargo to the entire region.
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From an Epistle of members of American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) Epistle who had visited Iraq <http://www.afsc.org/iraqhome.htm>

As we return to our Meetings and our communities, the task before us seems overwhelming. The US government is thwarting international law and undermining the authority of international institutions that were designed to uphold the power of law rather than the law of power. The government of Saddam Hussein is oppressive and undemocratic, but our government's policies have further concentrated control over resources and made the population even more dependent on government programs (including food distribution) for survival. It is the people of Iraq who are suffering and who will face certain tragedy in an expanded war.

As Quakers, we must seek to be faithful and rise to the enormity of the task. We call upon Friends to exercise leadership in the struggle to protect the Iraqi people and

liberate them from the burden of US-imposed policies. We encourage the following actions:

- [Campaign of Conscience](#) – continue to support the humanitarian efforts of the Campaign as a small gesture of support and hope for the people;
- [Peace Pledge](#) – speak out boldly against any plans for expanded military operations in Iraq by signing the Peace Pledge and sending letters to Congressional representatives; war will disrupt the distribution of the OFFP food basket and cause increased malnutrition and at least pockets of famine;
- Lift the economic sanctions – everyone we spoke to emphasized that all humanitarian efforts are only a “band-aid”; Iraq is a rich country that can take care of its own needs if allowed to resume normal economic activity;
- Demand an international investigation of the effects of depleted uranium (DU) – doctors report dramatic increases in the incidence of cancer, especially in the south, where the US military used more than 300 tons of DU; the sanctions are denying them the resources for adequate research and documentation, as well as the medical supplies for appropriate treatment;
- Dialogue – above all, we must demand that the US government engage in open and meaningful dialogue with the government of Iraq; even during the Vietnam War there were ongoing diplomatic efforts, but the US has continued to demonize Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi people and refuses direct dialogue while undermining UN negotiations.

We are committed to sharing our experience among Friends and other groups in the US. We must seek to break the isolation of the Iraqi people and work to bring Iraq back into the community of nations. These goals can be accomplished only by changing US policy and averting an expansion of military action. Even as we resist the demonization of Saddam Hussein, we must also resist the demonization of President Bush and other US government officials. The way of Truth requires us to recognize our own complicity in policies carried out in our name if we do not speak and act boldly to oppose them.

From: Why Not Attack Iraq? in Sojourners magazine

<http://wwwsojo.net>

War against Iraq would be monumental folly, for at least 10 reasons:

1. There is no justification for war. Iraq has not attacked or threatened the United States. It has not been implicated in the attacks of Sept. 11. There is no casus belli.
2. A military campaign against Iraq could kill thousands of innocent victims, inflicting further torment on a civilian population that has already suffered severely from more than 11 years of sanctions.
3. War and its aftermath would cost the United States tens of billions of dollars. The campaign against Afghanistan reportedly cost almost \$2 billion a month. An attack against Iraq would be much larger, with proportionately greater costs.
4. The military overthrow of Saddam Hussein would require U.S. forces to occupy Iraq in hostile circumstances for a prolonged period of time.
5. War could prompt the very use of weapons of mass destruction that the administration seeks to prevent. If pressed to the wall by a U.S. attack, Saddam Hussein might use whatever weapons he possesses—probably chemical or biological weapons—against the only targets he can hit, Israel or the advancing U.S. troops.
6. A U.S. war against an Arab nation would further destabilize the Gulf region and the Middle East, adding fuel to the fires of violence that are already consuming Israel and Palestine.
7. The proposed war would stir further anti-American hatred, especially in Islamic nations. It would strengthen the forces of political extremism and lead to new suicide bombings against the United States and Israel.
8. Attacking Iraq would undermine the international cooperation needed to prosecute and block the funding of al Qaeda and other terrorist networks. Washington might win the battle against

Iraq but lose the war against terrorism.

9. An unprovoked attack against Iraq would set a dangerous precedent of pre-emptive war that would undermine the very foundations of international security.

10. War against Iraq would make the United States an outlaw nation. It would violate the U.N. Charter and the principles of international law and lead to the further weakening of the United Nations.

It is imperative that we take action to prevent a military campaign against Iraq. War is not inevitable, as indicated by the continuing debates about Iraq within the Bush administration. If we organize and speak out, we can prevent the coming disaster and begin to build support for a more peaceful and cooperative approach to preventing terrorism and reducing threats from weapons of mass destruction.

From an Ecumenical gathering organised by the **World Council of Churches 5-6 August, Washington DC**, entitled "*Beyond September 11: Implications for US churches and the world*," the following is an extract from the final statement: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/>

In looking at threats to peace and security, we particularly lift up the concerns in the Middle East. We call on US churches to press their government to work for a just resolution of the Palestine-Israeli conflict, without delay, which will result in a viable and secure Palestinian state and a secure Israel at peace with its neighbours. Furthermore, at this particular moment in history, US churches are called to speak out against the threat of a military attack by their government against Iraq.

Our discussions affirmed certain fundamental principles:

* Security must be grounded in respect for human rights, due process, and international law. Security does not result from military actions.

* Moreover, human security and national security depend on economic justice and peace, in our own countries and throughout the world. We fear that the military response to terrorism will further divert needed resources away from meeting human needs.

* Peaceful relations among nations and peoples are achieved through multilateral decision-making, not by the unilateral economic and military actions of one country. The current US-led "war on terrorism" undermines these principles and threatens genuine peace and justice.

* As Christians we put our security in the hands of Jesus Christ and the biblical witness which says "perfect love casts out fear". (I John 4:18a)