



INTERFAITH COMMUNITIES UNITED FOR JUSTICE & PEACE

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Religious communities must stop blessing war and violence...

INTERFAITH COMMUNITIES UNITED FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE REJECT WAR IN IRAQ







approved by ICUJP Steering Committee, October 9, 2002

WITH IMPASSIONED AND BURNING ANGUISH, WE – INTERFAITH COMMUNITIES UNITED FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE – REPRESENTING OVER EIGHTY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA RELIGIOUS, CIVIL LIBERTIES, AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS REJECT PRESIDENTS BUSH'S CALLS FOR WAGING WAR AGAINST IRAQ. The manifestation of this administration's 'unilateralism' are revealed as its inner core of economic, strategic, and military policies now converging to lead us to war in Iraq.

Our opposition to war in Iraq grows from ideas we expressed in our December 2001 Mission Statement (*see: www.icujp.org*) opposing the "War on Terrorism:"

- a. (War) – will kill tens of thousands of innocent people. "The suffering of civilians especially Iraqi children is a mark of Cain on our endeavors since the 1990 first Gulf War. A (re)newed war will "impoverish and devastate" Iraq even more.
- b. (War) – "will lead to further conflict with Arab Muslims" – and unleash the use of "biological and other weapons" by a desperate Saddam Hussein. Opposition to war with Iraq is not in any way an acceptance of the ugly and brutal regime of its leader.
- c. (War) – "does not address the root causes of the terrorists' desperate acts, which are poverty, injustice, and wrongheaded U.S. policies in the Middle East." There remains a very strong suspicion that U.S. actions are purely an attempt to take over the oil resources of Iraq. War in Iraq serves to distract the American public from the bad economic and business news at home.
- d. (War) – will further "erode civil liberties here at home and human rights abroad. As a solution to problems, war is preposterous." (www.icujp.org Mission Statement)

WE AFFIRM LESSONS OF OUR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS:

-  That all human life is sacred, as our diverse faith traditions teach us
-  That we are called not to repay evil for evil, and not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good
-  That nation must not lift up a sword against nation; and that security is the fruit of peace, while terror is the harvest of war.
-  That the way to peace lies through the transformation of structures of injustice and of the politics of inclusion
-  That the earth and its resources belong to all its people, and that we are charged to use them wisely for the common good.
-  That those who would take over the earth and shape it to their will, never succeed

REFUTING THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S 'NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY' WAR AND MONOTHEISMS' CALL TO ARMS

Historically, the summons to war among the three monotheistic cultures of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism is part of an antecedent proposition that a 'religion' or 'God' provided a 'justification.' In the 'just' war tradition of all

three sister faiths a limited and defined set of goals formed the basis of action. The Bush administration radical proposals are for the 'enduring war on terrorism' of which Iraq is only a particular case. We are confronted with a novel concept - "endless war." Pre-emption is tantamount to a call for a perpetual crusade encapsulated in the administration's September strategic doctrine.

WE PRONOUNCE THAT 'ENDLESS WAR' IS DEMORALIZING in both senses of that term. Demoralizing - not only in its the formal adoption of a new public policy of hopelessness but also the corruption of moral ideas and commitments by rendering violence as the central tenet of our foreign and domestic policies.

WE COLLECTIVELY DISAVOW THE PATH that affirms that grief over the acts of terrorism and the accompanying loss of lives must lead to war. We refuse to accept violence as the necessary consequence of loss. In determined fashion we affirm our belief that religious traditions must not be invoked to bless war. This century's first major international crisis is now labeled as the struggle against terrorism but it is a repeat call for a turn to barbarism.

WE BELIEVE THAT OTHERS FACTORS often far less well understood, are the roots of this discord
(*see: Declaration of Interdependence – <http://www.icujp.org/news.shtml>*)

WE POINT TO THE ROLE:

- a. of economic and power differences between the richest Americans and vast majority of Americans as well as a parallel phenomena between this nation and the developing world;
- b. of the control and exploitation of resources especially inexpensive fossil fuels, oil for the already rich and richer while ignoring fairness and environmental concerns;
- c. of a century-long uneven and unfair process of what is now called globalization impacting not only our economies but also social cohesion in our society and others for the sake of serving ultimately destructive forms of modernization;
- d. of the accompanying mobilization of jingoistic nationalisms to undergird economic imperialism abroad and war economies at home;
- e. and the disturbing misuse of religious beliefs to fend off the confrontation with threatening change, the demonization of opponents and critics; and the embrace of death, war, and loss of civil liberties as acceptable collateral damage on our society.

In the 1980's Iraq was an American ally/client because the real enemy was Iran. Now, in short order, the Taliban in Afghanistan and now, Saddam Hussein's Iraq and soon Iran and Syria are anticipated targets by an undemocratically elected President. Bush's "regime change" is a cover for a policy of war without end. At home, Bush identifies radical goals for the growth of government surveillance, the Homeland Security and now buttressed by the doctrine of preemptive strikes in "The National Security Strategy of the United States."

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SEVEN STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES IN AFGHANISTAN
AND THEIR RELEVANCE IN IRAQ

In December 2001 the Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace (www.icujp.org) called for seven strategic initiatives that we now adopt to the Iraq situation:

1. "Stop the bombing" – *More bombing and war in the case of Iraq will not achieve anything but civilian deaths and misery. All parties should disavow preparations for war and the threat of war*
2. "Support international peace keepers" and in the Iraqi situation the return of weapons inspectors and the use of "world courts" to settle disputes
3. "Rid the world of weapons of mass destruction" – *which would include the diminishing Iraqi capabilities, the international verification of continued reduction of 'WMDs' (weapons of mass destruction.) Other powers should be included in this reduction program including the U.S.*
4. "Ensure economic justice in all nations in the name of human solidarity."
5. "Ensure economic justice for all in the U.S., especially children and workers."
6. "Protect civil rights"
7. "Guard human rights."

GLOBALISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS: A RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

The essence of points 1 to 7 (above) require a new critical commitment to globalism. We recognize a moral component to the process of globalism that must not be ignored. Why is globalism so threatening a process? Will globalism lead to a 'clash of civilizations' or a dialogue of civilizations? Dr. Jonathan Sacks has written suggesting that religions must lead toward an ethic of globalization that includes everyone and acknowledges that traditional doctrines of toleration and pluralism must give way to more – the dignity of difference.

WITH REGARD TO IRAQ WE GRIEVE:

- For the victims of the Gulf Wars, including a quarter of a million people who died in Operation Desert Storm in 1992 and the million or more who died in the Iran-Iraq war of 1983-88.
- For over half a million Iraqi children, and as many adults, who have died in the twelve years of the US-led sanctions regime
- For the Iraqi people, who have been suffering under intolerable conditions since the United States intentionally destroyed its infrastructure (electricity and water supply, as well as productive capacity) during the Gulf War and since.
- For the victims of the continuing US bombings of Iraq, occurring an average of twice a week over the last decade
- For the victims of Saddam Hussein's human right violations and political repression, notably the Kurdish people.

WITH REGARD TO IRAQ WE DEPLORE:

- The disingenuous argument that an Iraqi war is needed because Saddam Hussein might otherwise develop and use weapons of mass destruction, when arms inspection experts say that Iraq's capability to do so was effectively destroyed in the last Gulf War, and when it was the United States itself that helped Iraq develop biological and chemical weapons to use in its war against Iran during the 1980s.
- The transparent US attempts to manipulate arms inspections in a way that would provoke a reaction from Saddam Hussein, thereby justifying a full-scale US attack
- The dishonesty of the Bush Administration's suggestion of a link between Saddam Hussein and the terrorists of 9-11, when there is no evidence of any such link, and when the State Department's own recent compilation of terrorist activity does not document a single serious act of international terrorism by Iraq.

- The imperial perspective that prioritizes control over the Persian Gulf oil fields at any cost, including war, as a means to maintain US economic dominance globally while enriching American oil companies
- The cynicism of some who condemn Bush's war plans now, while leaving the door open for an invasion later.

WITH REGARD TO IRAQ WE CONDEMN:

- The continued sanctions and bombings against Iraq, which are destroying an entire society, impoverishing and terrorizing the Iraqi people
- The greed and great-power politics that have allowed US oil interests to bring us once again to the brink of war in the Persian Gulf region
- Any "pre-emptive" US military action against Iraq, which would be in flagrant violation of international law and of treaties that the US government is constitutionally obligated to respect
- Any and all attempts to create a provocation that could then be used to justify escalating US military intervention in Iraq
- Saddam Hussein's repressive domestic policies, which would certainly worsen under an intensified US attack

WITH REGARD TO IRAQ WE FEAR:

- That any US attack on Iraq, regardless of the alleged provocation, would result in Iraqi casualties in the tens or hundreds of thousands
- That there would be high casualties among US service people, and the probability of a long-term continued presence of US troops in the Persian Gulf region
- That an intensified Iraqi war would further destabilize the already volatile Middle East and Persian Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia
- That, within the US, workers and middle-class people would pay most of the cost of the war and bear the brunt of any oil price shock and other market disruptions
- That this war would siphon resources desperately needed on the domestic front for health care, education, and other vital services
- That this war would provide a rationale for the further erosion of civil liberties, civil rights, and the rights of labor to organize, within the United States.
- That a US war against Iraq could leave Europe and Japan extremely vulnerable to disruption of their energy supplies which could lead to economic disaster
- The possibility that the US might use "tactical" nuclear weapons in an Iraqi conflict

IN IRAQ AND ELSE WHERE WE PROPOSE:

- A massive grass-roots effort to educate the American public, especially the young people who would be called upon to fight in a war against Iraq, about the realities of the present crisis.
- UN inspectors -- not only in Iraq, but open up US facilities to parallel inspections
- International criminal courts
- Recognizance on nuclear capacity
- US disarmament
- Stop using "War against terrorism" as an excuse for continuation and escalation of warmaking US imperial policies
- That religious communities stop blessing war and violence