



INTERFAITH COMMUNITIES UNITED FOR JUSTICE & PEACE
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THE LIE OF THE *Just War*

BY LEONARD I. BEERMAN, MAHER HATHOUT, JAMES LAWSON, GEORGE F. REGAS

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America's sense of itself - its sense of safety and insulated invincibility – was the second order casualty of September 11, 2001. As we mark the human toll felt by families who lost dear family members – parents and children – we ask what is the appropriate form of memorial? How could this attack happen on American soil? Will we ever feel safe again? A dawning reality for Americans who travel is our vulnerability expressed in longer waits at airports; stockinged feet, and other markers of vigilance. Our response to loss can take two radically different forms. Either we find our lives filled with anger and bile flooded by blinding rage or we will re-craft our grief as a vehicle for mending the hatred and strife that brought us to this day of mourning. As leaders of our four faiths we collectively disavow the path that affirms that grief must lead to war. We refuse to accept violence as the necessary consequence of loss. Our religious traditions must not bless war. Those peace-loving expressions of one God must not support the lie of the "just war" against Iraq.

We see the costs of war as including the loss of American lives and treasure; further death and neglect of Iraqi civilians especially children; the tarnishing of the United States' reputation and diplomatic leadership; and an intensification of hatred in the Middle East toward the United States and the West. We reject the heresy that sprang from the embrace of nationalism by religion's sanction of wars. For all time the evil and pernicious "blessing of war" as "just" must be repudiated.

We know what our faith traditions command of us: to be peacemakers; to do good to those who hate us; to abide by the peace of God/The Ultimate. "Our faith traditions", said Gandhi, "are highways leading to the same destination". Christian and Muslim, Hindu and Jew, Buddhist and Shinto, Baha'i, Sikh and Jain: all celebrate the sacredness of human life and charge us to build a just, peaceful and equitable world; all celebrate the power of love to vanquish hate and the power of mercy to overcome vengeance.

We are founding members of the Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace. We also remember all too well the wars carried out in our religions' name in Vietnam, Korea, Cambodia and many more places. Our experience in faith leads us to repudiate war as the method for problem solving. We mourn the loss of life resulting from the attacks in New York and Washington but we do not ask that more blood be shed. Our mourning is a peaceful mourning and is not a podium to call for a war of vengeance against Iraqis.

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