

# SILENT VIGIL FOR PEACE

In front of Borough Hall Monday nights from 5:30-6:30. This vigil is silent and peaceful in the Quaker tradition. Feel free to join us. Bring a candle and a peaceful sign if you wish.

## **Alternatives to War Against Iraq** from Friends Committee on National Legislation

In 1990-1991, Iraq invaded Kuwait, and, in response, the U.S. mobilized an international coalition, under the authority of the UN Security Council, to force Iraq to withdraw. After an intensive and devastating bombing campaign and a U.S.-led invasion, Iraq withdrew from Kuwait and agreed to the terms of a UN-brokered cease fire.

But the war did not end in 1991. Since then, the U.S.-with the support primarily from the U.K.--has continued waging a deadly war against Iraq in an effort to hasten the end of Saddam Hussein's regime, or, failing that, to coerce the regime to comply fully with the terms of the cease fire. The U.S. and U.K. have imposed and enforced "no fly" zones over Iraq, leading to periodic bombing of Iraqi air defenses installations. The U.S. has also led the UN Security Council in maintaining and enforcing punishing economic sanctions. As a result of these campaigns, tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians have died from the economic sanctions, many other civilians have died from the bombing, and the once highly-developed Iraqi economy has been destroyed. Yet, Saddam Hussein remains firmly in power and as defiant as ever.

Now the Bush Administration is preparing the American public and foreign governments for the possibility of U.S.-led military action to topple Saddam Hussein's regime.

There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator. His regime has oppressed the Iraqi people, committed acts of aggression against its neighbors, and developed and used weapons of mass destruction. These activities have contributed greatly to the suffering of Iraqi citizens and citizens in neighboring countries, and these activities have threatened peace and security throughout the region. There is justifiable cause for concern and intensive, multilateral engagement on this matter. However, demonizing and threatening Saddam Hussein-as others have recently demonized, threatened, and attacked the U.S.- will only increase the violence and hatred and deepen the suffering for all involved. The U.S. and the UN must seek another way.

### **War Is Not the Answer**

War is not the answer to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq any more than it is the answer to terrorism. War with Iraq will not make the world more secure from these weapons. Indeed, war could lead Saddam Hussein to use such weapons as a last resort on the battlefield or against civilian populations. Further, other regimes, seeing what the U.S. is doing to Iraq and fearful that they will be next, may feel compelled to equip themselves with such weapons in self-defense against the U.S. or other potential aggressors. A dangerous proliferation of WMD may result.

### **If Not War with Iraq, Then What?**

Instead of risking a war that may result in the unleashing WMD by all sides, the U.S. and the UN must take a different path--a way that strengthens the international rule of law, demonstrates respect for human rights, and breaks the cycle of violence. We recommend the following alternative approaches to war.

1. **Stop threatening to violently overthrow Saddam Hussein.** This U.S. policy undermined the rule of international law. Further, it will likely provoke Saddam Hussein and others to respond in kind with violence, undermine efforts to reduce terrorism and stop the proliferation of WMD, under-cut domestic political opposition in Iraq, and elevate Saddam Hussein's political standing among his many sympathizers at home and abroad.
2. **Resume direct negotiations with Iraq.** U.S. and Iraqi diplomats must begin talking to one another. Diplomatic engagement helped prevent a devastating nuclear war between the U.S., Soviet Union, and China during the Cold War. Diplomatic engagement now, under the auspices of the UN Security Council or other third party mediation, can help lead the U.S. and Iraq away from the brink of war.
3. **Demilitarize the conflict with Iraq.** The U.S. should immediately stop enforcing the "no fly" zones and bombing Iraqi military installations. The Iraqi government has little incentive to cooperate with weapons inspections when its sovereignty is being violated daily and it is being fired upon regularly by U.S. aircraft. Over the years, many civilians have been killed by errant bombs or as a consequence of attacks on military sites located near civilian populations. The end result of this policy has been to strengthen Saddam Hussein's regime domestically in the face of what many in

Iraq believe to be a hostile enemy and to diminish U.S. standing in the Muslim and Arab world generally.

4. **End the inhumane economic sanctions immediately.** The U.S.-led UN economic sanctions have violated both international humanitarian and U.S. law by harming civilians as a means to coerce action by a government. The sanctions have harshly punished the people of Iraq for the actions of an oppressive regime over which they have no control. Tens of thousands have died from curable and preventable diseases due to the lack of adequate nutrition, medical supplies, clean water, and sanitation. The end result of this eleven-year U.S.-led policy is a generation of civilians without hope.
5. **Continue the current embargo on the sale and transfer of military equipment.** The sale and transfer of weapons to Iraq and the region by the U.S., Russia, China, and others has helped to fuel both the escalating violence and the increasing lethality of that violence. The U.S. should work with others to extend an international moratorium on the sale and transfer of major weapons systems to all countries in the region. Long-term peace and security will require ending the current weapons build-up, reducing the level of threat, building confidence, and supporting civilian control of militaries.
6. **Continue to press Iraq to accept UN weapons inspections and monitoring.** Iraq has an international obligation to assure its neighbors that its WMD stockpiles and production facilities have been destroyed. This is an essential confidence-building measure to advance peace and security in the region. However, the same inspections should be extended to other countries, as well. The U.S. should work to expand this monitoring effort in the context of a regional arms control and disarmament agreement. The region has a long history of devastating wars. Countries will disarm only when leaders are assured of their security through other, more effective means

**Write to your Senators and to the newspapers encouraging our government to pursue alternatives to war. Let's end the cycle of violence.**

#### WHITE HOUSE

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White House comments line: (202) 456-1111. from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday.

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Opting for peace does not mean a passive acquiescence to evil or compromise of principle. It demands an active struggle against hatred, oppression and disunity, but not by using methods of violence. Building peace requires creative and courageous action.

-- Pope John Paul I (Jan. 21, 2003)

