

Statement on Iraq

*You are invited to indicate your support for the following statement, **Prepare for Peace in Iraq**, which challenges the international community “to accompany the people of Iraq, not with more bombs and missiles, but with moral, political and material support.” The sign-on process is described at the end of the statement.*

The statement is the joint initiative of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Canadian Council of Churches, and Project Ploughshares. It emphasizes the urgent need for verifiable Iraqi rejection of weapons of mass destruction and argues that neither war nor the status quo is a means of assuring that important objective. Instead, it offers a positive, realistic, and transformative approach to the problem of Iraq.

National church leaders are commending this statement to congregations and parishes across Canada, and are calling on all Canadians to endorse this message for a peaceful and enduring resolution of the Iraq crisis. The statement is thus also being widely circulated to community groups, faith communities and individuals. Project Ploughshares has been asked by the statement sponsors to collect the responses and to forward them to the Prime Minister at regular intervals.

Prepare for Peace in Iraq

We believe that war is not the answer.

Twelve years ago a UN-mandated and US-led coalition went to war against Iraq. Tens of thousands of children, women, and men were killed. The destroyed infrastructure and subsequent economic sanctions together with continued bombing contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands more. Now, just when UN inspectors have begun to work effectively, we are on the brink of another war.

We believe that renewed war on Iraq will not deliver lasting disarmament. War is most likely to deliver more of what it always does – lost lives, environmental destruction, physical and psychological damage for both victims and aggressors, wasted resources, threats of widened political instability and increased terrorism, more hatred, and re-energized extremism.

We believe that peace is more than the avoidance of war.

We also know that simply avoiding war will not solve the fundamental problems of Iraq – an unrepresentative regime that violates human rights and may not be in compliance with its obligations related to weapons of mass destruction. Peace and justice require more than the absence of war. Outlaw regimes that still retain or aspire to the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction cannot be allowed to stand, in Iraq or anywhere else. Indeed, we believe that durable disarmament and accountable governance are closely linked.

We believe that peace is linked to human rights and the will of the people.

Iraqi governments will be most likely to permanently forego the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction when the Iraqi people have the means to define and mandate alternative national priorities. If Iraqis were free to choose, it is unlikely that they would support a nuclear weapons program that wastes resources and brings them only crushing sanctions and ongoing pariah status. Government that honours the will and rights of the people, and that is built on an empowered civil society, is key to the reliable rejection of weapons of mass destruction by

Iraq. Responsible government of this kind cannot be installed by war. Iraqis must be authors of their own change.

Yet for many decades Western policy has undermined the pursuit of democracy and relentlessly disempowered the very people of Iraq on whom constructive change depends. The West's active military and political support for the regime of Saddam Hussein until 1990, as well as comprehensive economic sanctions since then, has left the tyrannical regime strengthened and enriched and the people demeaned and impoverished. We reject the increasing resort to military means to resolve entrenched conflicts.

We believe the arms race in the Middle East must be ended.

United Nations Security Council resolutions require that Iraq verifiably destroy and end its pursuit of all weapons of mass destruction and medium to long-range ballistic missiles. But these same demands are repeatedly placed in the context of the objective of establishing the Middle East as a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. As long as some states in the region retain or pursue such weapons, others can be expected to attempt to obtain them as well.

We believe we must put the people of Iraq first.

Iraq has become a place of extraordinary suffering, and war would only add to it. Even without war, these hardships will remain the primary reality for the people of Iraq for the foreseeable future. The tragedy of Iraq has been decades in the making, and the road to genuine transformation will be slow and troubled. The only reasonable certainty they face is that the costs of war would be even worse than the current situation and would delay, not hasten, the advent of sustainable change. We believe it is our collective responsibility to accompany the people of Iraq, not with more bombs and missiles, but with moral, political and material support.

We believe it is time to act for peace, not war.

- a) Reject further war on Iraq – the consequences of which are borne primarily by the people;
- b) Persist in a vigorous strategy of containment to prevent Iraq's acquisition and/or retention of weapons of mass destruction through internationally mandated inspections and ongoing monitoring;
- c) Pursue diplomacy toward establishing the entire Middle East as a region free of all weapons of mass destruction;
- d) End the comprehensive economic sanctions against Iraq;
- e) Embark on diplomatic and political engagement, including material support for Iraqi civil society, to advance respect for human rights and accountable governance;
- f) Reinvigorate diplomatic efforts with states of the region to address outstanding issues, notably the Israel/Palestine conflict, in the context of region-wide talks on security and cooperation in the Middle East; and
- g) Explore legal/judicial and other measures to address accusations of crimes against humanity.

Sign-on process

You can endorse this statement electronically on the Project Ploughshares website (www.ploughshares.ca). You can also complete the attached endorsement form and send it to Project Ploughshares by fax, 1-519-888-0018, or by mail, Project Ploughshares, 57 Erb Street West, Waterloo, ON, N2L 6C2. You can also phone in your endorsement to Project Ploughshares at 1-519-888-6541, ext. 706, or toll-free at 1-888-907-3223, ext. 706. Project Ploughshares will add your endorsement to the website endorser list. A background document providing details and sources for the issues addressed in the statement is available on the Project Ploughshares website.

We call for peacemaking.

We/I reaffirm our/my rejection of war on Iraq. We call on the Government of Canada to refuse any military involvement in such a war, and further call people and governments everywhere to redouble the pursuit of peacemaking.

Individual endorsement

Name: _____

Address: _____

Group Affiliation: _____
(If desired – does not imply group endorsement)

Signature: _____ Tel: _____

Note: Only your name, city, province and comments will be publicly displayed. Please be assured that none of the information you provide will be used for any other purpose or passed on to any other organization.

Organization endorsement

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Organization Representative: _____

Signature: _____ Tel: _____

Note: Only the organization name, city, province and comments will be publicly displayed. We are asking for an organization representative with telephone number in order to be able to verify that the organization named has genuinely submitted its endorsement. Please be assured that none of the information you provide will be used for any other purpose or passed on to any other organization.

Comments (by individuals or on behalf of organizations)

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