

Quaker Service Agencies Statement on the Launching of War on Iraq

“A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil that good may come of it.”
– William Penn, 1693

WE ARE APPALLED AND DEEPLY SADDENED by the decision of the United Kingdom, the United States of America and other countries, such as Australia, to launch a war against Iraq. We pray for all those affected – combatants and non-combatants alike. We pray for world leaders that God’s grace will lead them to bring a rapid cessation to the war.

War threatens to terrify, maim, kill, and bereave vast numbers of innocent people in Iraq who are already suffering the punitive effects of economic sanctions (half of Iraq’s citizens are children). We fear that violence in the region will intensify, whilst efforts towards peaceful democratic change will be undermined. Bridge-building between the West and the Arab and Muslim world will become more difficult. Support for political extremists across the world appears likely to increase.

The primary purpose of the United Nations to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” through patient dialogue and disarmament has been cast aside by governments that claim to be world leaders in democracy and human rights. We are shamed, grieved and angered by the fact that a small minority of governments has chosen the unconscionable act of war, going against the will of the international community and against the will of many of their own citizens.

Despite our grief and shame, our spirits are heartened by the tens of millions of world citizens who are taking up the responsibility of citizenship – to learn

about global issues, to affirm the role of the United Nations and the Security Council, and to challenge the actions of government when their actions contravene what is moral and just.

Quakers recognise that the crisis over Iraq has presented extraordinary challenges to the international community. The world’s goal for Iraq must be the same as that for any nation – a just and sustainable peace for its people and neighbours. To this end, the United Nations weapons inspections and disarmament process appeared to be making progress. The lifting of indiscriminate economic sanctions against

Iraq might have helped its people towards determining their own future according to their right.

War is not the answer, not now and not ever. War does not bring about peace. War does not bring about security. War hurts innocent people and generates new resentment and new impetus for revenge in generations to come. Faith in violence as a means of solving political problems is both dangerous and contrary to our understanding of God’s way. It is irresponsible for any nation to possess weapons of mass destruction and threaten their use against others. Peace between nations can only be won if the international community accepts a common responsibility for achieving disarmament and answering the vital needs of all. We implore world leaders to return to the tables of the United Nations with ever more resolve to solve international crises peacefully and to hold each other accountable for their actions in the global community.

We pray for the day when “nations will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4). Quakers remain joined to the global effort to bring this day nearer. We renounce the

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use of violence, and affirm the power of non-violence and love, to bring about the cause of peace and justice for all. —20th Day of Third Month of 2003 ◻

Signatories: Mary Ellen McNish (General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee); Margaret Clare Ford (Clerk, Canadian Friends Service Committee, Canadian Yearly Meeting); Joe Volk (Executive Secretary Friends Committee on National Legislation, Washington, DC, USA); Bruce Birchard (General Secretary, Friends General Conference); Elizabeth Duke (General Secretary, Friends World Committee for Consultation); Jo Valentine (Clerk, Northern Friends Peace Board, Bolton, UK); Steve Baumgarten (Executive Director, Pendle Hill Quaker Study Center, Wallingford, PA, USA); Grant McCullough (Project Leader, Quaker Cottage

Family Centre, Northern Ireland); Martina Weitsch and Elizabeth Scurfield (Joint Representatives/Heads of Office, Quaker Council for European Affairs, Brussels, Belgium); Beryl Milner (Clerk, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, Britain Yearly Meeting); Jeremy Routledge (Director, The Quaker Peace Centre, Cape Town, South Africa); Derry Gordon (Convenor, Quaker Service Aotearoa/New Zealand); Heather Saville (Convenor, Quaker Service Australia Management Committee, Australia); Bernt-Erik Heid (Chairman, Quaker Service Norway); Tofte Frykman (Convener, Quaker Service Sweden); Rachel Brett (Representative [Human Rights and Refugees], Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva, Switzerland); Jack Patterson (Representative, Quaker United Nations Office, New York, USA)

Are you planting trees?

Friends at the 20th Friends World Committee for Consultation Triennial in New England in 2000 encouraged one another to plant trees. Here in Canada, as elsewhere, many Friends take long flights to attend Friends' gatherings, burning aviation fuel, and adversely affecting the atmosphere. Planting trees is one small way to help against the adverse effects of such pollution, since trees absorb carbon dioxide, though the best way is to use less harmful manners of travel (for more complete information on this, please see Vince Zelazny's article in the May, 2002 issue of *The Canadian Friend*).

At home, in communities, at meeting houses and churches, there are many opportunities to plant trees. Each one can encourage Friends in their yearly meetings or groups to take up this work. Ask Friends to collect reports, along with photographs, of what they are doing. There will be a display at the 21st FWCC Triennial. ◻

(Based upon an article in "Friends World News 2003/1")



Photo by Rachael Maxcy, of Vancouver Monthly Meeting