

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

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PEACE IN IRAQ THROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We urge the United States to establish a plan and timetable for withdrawal from Iraq. Any withdrawal must ensure the safety of all of those Iraqis who have assisted the United States since the invasion.

We also believe that the United States must change its approach to the occupation.

- The United States should explore the efficacy of Iraqi workers, and must invest first in Iraqi workers for reconstruction prior to issuing contracts to other U.S. corporations.
- The United States must make the first priority the reconstruction of infrastructure including electricity and water.
- The United States should commit to maintaining the Iraqi economic structures for delivering basic public services including water, electricity, education, health care, etc.
- The United States must ensure the distribution of food in a consistent and effective manner.
- The United States Congress should declare that it is the policy of the United States to withdraw all U.S. military troops and bases from Iraq. The U.S. should cease offensive military operations, continue the withdrawal of combat troops as the security of the situation warrants such a withdrawal, and the transitioning of peacekeeping to UN forces.

United States should explore the efficacy of Iraqi workers, and must invest first in Iraqi workers for reconstruction prior to issuing contracts to U.S. corporations.

Iraqi citizens are highly educated in areas of engineering and reconstruction. A large number of professionals were trained in Europe, the United States and other academic centers. Many of these professionals returned to Iraq and taught in universities and professional schools and used their training in government and business. These highly competent local professionals know Iraqi culture and the way to get things done efficiently. The U.S. and multinational corporations do not need to be the prime contractors or the beneficiaries of the reconstruction contracts. If they maintain their prime status as contractors, it will continue to be obvious to the Iraqi people that the U.S. is primarily interested in supporting U.S. businesses and not in the reconstruction of Iraq. If the U.S. invests in Iraqi businesses, it will increase employment and develop the local economy, carrying a high multiplier effect. Additionally, the high level of unemployment in Iraq (approaching 50%) continues to be a significant contributing factor to the desperation that is the source of the rampant violence. Reducing the level of unemployment is a key factor in creating peace.

United States must make the first priority the reconstruction of infrastructure including electricity and water.

In the first gulf war the U.S. bombing targeted water purification, sewage treatment and electricity generating plants. During the following years of sanctions, Iraqi engineers and workers cobbled together a system as best they could. They made the old half-destroyed

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system moderately serviceable. However, since the 2003 invasion, electricity generation is lower than pre-war levels. More than two years after the invasion, electricity and safe water continue to be in short supply due to the slow pace of reconstruction and as well as new destruction. Iraqis working in the reconstruction of utilities are likely to increase employment and decrease violence.

United States should commit to maintaining the Iraqi economic structures for delivering basic public services including water, electricity, education, and health care.

The government of Iraq before sanctions used its oil wealth to provide water, electricity, education and health care to all Iraqis at either no or low cost. This structure created a highly educated population with well developed education and health care systems within the country. The Bush Administration asserts that its goal is to provide an opportunity for the Iraqi people to create a democracy in their own style. Democracy is not the same as free market capitalism. In order to support the Iraqis unique form of democracy, the United States should maintain the existing economic structure in order to minimize economic dislocation and maximize the people's participation in known services. Thus, none of the previously government run programs (including oil) should be privatized by the United States or the transitional government.

United States must ensure the distribution of food in a consistent and effective manner.

During the twelve years of economic sanctions in Iraq, there was high unemployment as the economy ground to a halt. In order to alleviate the worst consequences of sanctions, the Iraqi government sought to distribute minimum food rations to every man, woman and child in the country. It was estimated by CARE in 2002 that 40% of the population was dependent on these rations for the sole source of nourishment; and an additional 20% of the population relied on them for a principal source of food. Recently, it has been reported by reliable sources in various parts of the country that the food distribution has been sporadic at best. Without a reliable food supply, people become desperate and more prone to violence. Providing food on a regular basis is a small step toward creating a real peace.

United States Congress should declare that it is the policy of the United States to withdraw all U.S. military troops and bases from Iraq. The U.S. should cease offensive military operations, continue the withdrawal of combat troops as the security of the situation warrants such a withdrawal, and the transitioning of peacekeeping to UN forces.

Indefinite occupation of Iraq is the source of much of the violence. Many insurgent groups have expressed a willingness to engage in political dialogue if the U.S. clearly states its intention to withdraw from Iraq. Only by making the long term position of the United States unambiguous will the Iraqi people have faith in their nascent government. Then the U.S. must continue the withdrawal of combat troops to evidence our commitment to this point. Other countries, especially Iraq's neighbors, have an interest in a stable Iraq but are not likely to help as long as the U.S. military occupation continues. The gradual withdrawal of the U.S. military must ensure the safety of the Iraqis.

Peace will only be possible in Iraq when the economy is functioning and the citizens are engaged in productive activity. Peace will come when Iraqis can care for their families and neighborhoods. Let us create peace by investing in the people of Iraq.

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