

# THE IRAQ DEBACLE: THE LEGACY OF SEVEN YEARS OF WAR

**We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, mark the August 31st partial withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq with the following evaluation and recommendations:**

- The U.S. occupation of Iraq continues and the reduction of U.S. troops in Iraq can at best be called only a rebranded occupation. While the number of U.S. troops in Iraq will be reduced from a high of 165,000, there will still be 50,000 troops left behind, some 75,000 contractors, five huge "enduring bases" and an Embassy the size of Vatican City.
- The U.S. military's overthrow of the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein did not lead to a better life for Iraqis-just the opposite. It resulted in the further destruction of basic infrastructure-electricity, water, sewage-that continues to this day. The U.S. dropped more tons of bombs on Iraq than in all of WWII, destroying Iraq's electrical, water and sewage systems. Iraq's health care and higher education systems, once the best in the entire region, have been decimated. The U.S. war on Iraq unleashed a wave of violence that has left over one million Iraqis dead and four million displaced, as well as ethnic rivalries that continue to plague the nation. We have seriously wounded millions of Iraqis, creating a lifetime of suffering and economic hardship for them, their communities and the entire nation as it struggles to rebuild.
- Life expectancy for Iraqis fell from 71 years in 1996 to 67 years in 2007 due to the war and destruction of the healthcare system. The U.S. use of weapons such as depleted uranium and white phosphorous has taken a severe toll, with the cancer rate in Fallujah, for example, now worse than that of Hiroshima.
- The majority of the refugees and internally displaced persons created by the US intervention have been abandoned. Of the nearly 4 million refugees, many are now living in increasingly desperate circumstances in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and around the world. As undocumented refugees, most are not allowed to work and are forced to take extremely low paying, illegal jobs (\$3/day) or rely on the UN and charity to survive. The United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) has documented a spike in the sex trafficking of Iraqi women.
- Iraq still does not have a functioning government. Many months after the March 7 elections, there is still a political vacuum and violence that is killing roughly 300 civilians a month. There is no functioning democracy in place and little sign there will be one in the near future.
- The Iraq War has left a terrible toll on the U.S. troops. More than one million American service members have deployed in the Iraq War effort. Over 4,400 U.S. troops have been killed and tens of thousands severely injured. More than one in four U.S. troops have come home from the Iraq war with health problems that require medical or mental health

treatment. PTSD rates in the military have skyrocketed. In 2009, a record number of 245 soldiers committed suicide.

- The war has drained our treasury. As of August 2010, U.S. taxpayers have spent over \$750 billion on the Iraq War effort. Counting the cost of lifetime care of wounded vets and the interest payments on the money we borrowed to pay for this war, the real cost will be in the trillions. This misappropriation of funds has contributed to the economic crises we are experiencing, including the lack of funds for our schools, healthcare, infrastructure and investments in clean, green jobs.
- The U.S. officials who got us into this disastrous war on the basis of lies have not been held accountable. Not George Bush, Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, Karl Rove, Donald Rumsfeld. No one. Neither have the Bush administration lawyers who authorized torture, including Jay Bybee and John Yoo. The "think tanks," journalists and pundits who perpetuated the lies have not been fired-most are today cheerleading for the war in Afghanistan.
- The war has led to the pillaging of Iraqi resources. The U.S. Department of Defense has been unable to account for \$8.7 billion of Iraqi oil and gas money meant for humanitarian needs and reconstruction after the 2003 invasion. The invasion has also led to the dismantling of Iraqi government control over the nation's oil. In 2001, Vice President Dick Cheney's energy task force, which included executives of America's largest energy companies, recommended opening up areas of their energy sectors to foreign investment. The resulting Iraq Oil Law has led to the global grab for Iraq's resources.
- The war has not made us more secure. The US policy of torture, extraordinary rendition, indefinite detention, violent and deadly raids on civilian homes, gunning down innocent civilians in the streets and absence of habeas corpus has fueled the fires of hatred and extremism toward Americans. The very presence of our troops in Iraq and other Muslim nations has become a recruiting tool.

**Given the above, we, the undersigned individuals and organizations, mark the occasion of this partial troop withdrawal by calling on the Administration and Congress to take the following actions:**

\* Withdrawal of all U.S. troops and military contractors from Iraq and the closing of all U.S. bases;

\* Reparations to help the Iraqis repair their basic infrastructure and increased funds for the millions of internally and externally displaced Iraqis;

\* Full support for the U.S. troops who suffer from the internal and external wounds of war;

\* Prosecution of those officials responsible for dragging our country into this disaster;

\* Transfer of funds from war into resources to rebuild America, with a focus on green jobs.

\* The lessons of this disastrous intervention should also be an impetus for Congress and the administration to end the war in Afghanistan. It's time to focus on creating real security here at home and rebuilding America.

*August 14, 2010*

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- \* Veterans For Peace
- \* Bay Area Labor Committee for Peace & Justice
- \* CODEPINK: Women for Peace
- \* Community Organizing Center
- \* Courage to Resist
- \* Fellowship of Reconciliation
- \* Global Exchange
- \* Institute for Policy Studies' New Internationalism Project
- \* Iraq Veterans Against the War
- \* Jeannette Rankin Peace Center
- \* Just Foreign Policy
- \* Mid-Missouri Peaceworks
- \* Military Families Speak Out
- \* Pax Christi - USA
- \* Under the Hood
- \* US Labor Against the War
- \* Voices for Creative Nonviolence
- \* Voters for Peace
- \* War Is a Crime