

A Call to Speak Out on Iraq **July 4, 2005**

This year our nation is at war as we observe the 4th of July, a day that honors those founders who spoke out for independence from tyranny. Today in Iraq a cruel dictator has been deposed, yet the suffering of the Iraqi people continues. Mandated elections have been held, yet the future of Iraq remains as uncertain as ever. Day by day the cost of this war for the United States, for Iraq, for peace grows clearer. No weapons of mass destruction have been found; no link to the attacks on September 11, 2001 has been shown. It has become clear that the rationale for invasion was at best a tragic mistake, at worst a clever deception.

As people of faith, we believe in the transcendent sovereignty and love of God for creation, and that the responsibility of human beings is thus to pursue justice and peace for all. We also believe that, as the biblical prophets of old, who in faithfulness to God spoke out to a people and a nation they loved, in humility before God we too are to speak to a land and people we love. As religious leaders we invite others who share our affections and dismay to recognize the time has come to speak out.

The time has come to say:

NO to leaders who have sent many honorable sons and daughters to fight a dishonorable war;
NO to the violence that has cost over sixteen hundred American lives, left thousands grievously injured, and killed untold numbers of Iraqis whose deaths we are unwilling to acknowledge or count;
NO to the abuse of prisoners that has shamed our nation and damaged our reputation throughout the world;
NO to the price tag for this war that has rendered our federal budget incapable of adequately caring for the poorest of our own citizens; and,
NO to theologies that demonize other nations and religions while arrogantly claiming righteousness for ourselves as if we share no complicity in human evil.

The time has come to say:

YES to foreign policies that seek justice rather than domination, compassion rather than control;
YES to an early fixed timetable for the withdrawal of United States troops and the establishment of a credible multinational peacekeeping force;
YES to the honoring of human rights even for our enemies and for a restoration of our reputation as a people committed to the rule of law;
YES to spending and taxing priorities that put the poor first, providing health care, housing, employment, and quality education for all, not just the few; and,
YES to a restoration of truth telling in the public square and to “last resort” rather than “first strike” as the criterion for the use of force to restrain evil.

On the day we celebrate our freedom, we acknowledge that the freedom promised in the toppling of a dictator has been replaced by the humiliation of occupation and the violence of a civil war. The sacrifice of brave men and women has been used to serve policies that have diminished our nation's prestige and our capacity to be agents of justice in the world.

It is time to speak out that this 4th of July will celebrate the best ideals of our nation for our sake and for the sake of the world.

The Governing Board of the National Council of Churches, meeting in Louisville, KY on May 23 and 24, 2005, resolved to circulate the following statement "A Call to Speak Out on Iraq" and encourage NCC Heads of Communion and other major religious leaders to add their name to this document. We plan to seek signatures between Memorial Day and the 4th of July, when this document will be released publicly to the media and sent to the Administr

TO ADD YOUR NAME AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY TO THE STATEMENT

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