

A Catholic Voice on the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq

INTRODUCTION: We address ourselves to the US Catholic Community and all people of good will. As a Catholic social justice organization working for systemic change, 8th Day Center for Justice proclaims and promotes the fundamental Gospel values of nonviolence, the dignity of each person, the common good and the integrity of creation. In this spirit, we denounce the unprovoked US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the ongoing occupation -- including torture and all other human rights violations, and all US efforts to control Iraq's economy, security and political life.

RATIONALE FOR 8th DAY'S POSITION: The whole Catholic voice has not been heard. We appreciate the Vatican position before the invasion. Prior to March 2003, the Vatican -- along with the US Conference of Catholic Bishops as well as the leaders of most major religious denominations -- declared that the pending attack failed "just war" criteria.¹ Despite its declaration, the Vatican failed to use its moral authority to guide military personnel away from participation in this war. Furthermore, once the attack began the Vatican supported the US occupation as a necessary force for stabilizing the country.² 8th Day Center adds its voice to those who disagree with this position.

8th Day's position is that the invasion was immoral and illegal

- the reasons for the invasion were inaccurate and manipulated the public trust
- the US did not have a "just cause" because it was under no imminent threat
- all reasonable diplomatic options had not been exhausted
- the invasion would set a precedent for preventive strikes
- the invasion violated several articles of international law
- 8th Day's position is that the occupation is an extension of this immoral invasion
- the number of deaths and injuries of combatants and civilians are incomprehensible
- the US is training local death squads (Salvadoran Option) akin to the dirty wars it conducted in Central America in the 1980s
- prisoners are designated "enemy combatants", without recourse to international standards or due process

- torture has become a normal part of the occupation⁹
- the US employs the policy of “Rendition”, that is, sending prisoners to other countries for the purpose of torture.
- Iraq’s infrastructure has been devastated
- Iraq’s antiquities, treasures of the human community, and culture have been destroyed
- the use of Depleted Uranium munitions has turned Iraq into a radioactive “hot zone”
- the US plans to maintain indefinite military, economic and administrative authority over Iraq
- Iraqis voted for "a timetable for the withdrawal of the multinational forces from Iraq"
- US military personnel have been placed in the untenable moral position of killing or being killed
- the US “back door” draft -- a unilateral extension of military enlistments -- prolongs this untenable moral position
- resistance fighters target everyone aligned with the occupation forces
- vast numbers of civilian and military personnel are suffering Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- many nations now seek nuclear weapons as a deterrence to a “preventive” attack and occupation by the US
- astronomical military spending steals from people who are made poor through cuts in social programs.

CALL: In recognition of the priority of self determination of the Iraqi people, and in light of the immorality of the invasion and occupation, we call for . . .

1. the immediate, planned withdrawal of all US troops, and the cessation of any plans for permanent US military installations in Iraq and the control of the Iraqi economy; the international community to offer assistance to the people of Iraq in building a system of public order which ensures both the protection of human rights and safeguards against indigenous and/or foreign entities destabilizing Iraq to control its oil resources.

2. all occupying military personnel to reconsider their involvement in this immoral undertaking and refuse to participate any further; the Catholic community -- in light of the social, economic and legal risks incurred by such a decision -- to support those who are reconsidering their involvement, or who refuse to participate, by offering the following services: personal counseling, guidance in seeking Conscientious Objector status, sanctuary from prosecution, free legal advice, financial aid, and even heralding their moral fortitude.
3. the Catholic community to demand US restitution for all the harm done to the Iraqi people, their institutions and the land. Restorative Justice demands nothing less.

CLOSING: In the spirit of the Gospel command to treat all persons as our sisters and brothers and to show respect for all creation, the staff of the 8th Day Center for Justice denounces, once again, the unprovoked US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the ongoing occupation -- including torture and all other human rights violations, and all US efforts to control Iraq's economy, security and political life. We invite you to join your voice to our call.