

Stopping the War(s)

Why be concerned about this war?

1. Reliable estimates are that from 10 thousand to 4 million people could die from a new war with Iraq. 70% of the 25 million Iraqi people are dependent upon the Iraqi government for their monthly food allotment. War will disrupt this food distribution system with unknown, potentially very deadly, consequences. (See the following web address for one article on this www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/article_191.shtml)
2. Modern wars, including the Gulf War of 1991, typically destroy some or most of the civilian infrastructure of the country in which the war takes place. This leads to the death of many non-combatants, especially young children and the elderly. The destruction of civilian infrastructure is an international war crime according to the Geneva Conventions, and the country that commits them (as the U.S. did in the Gulf War) undermines its own ethical and moral fiber, such that the winner becomes a loser as well. Two legal organizations have served both the Bush and Blair administrations with a document stating that they will be prosecuted for war crimes if they harm civilians or civilian infrastructure in another attack on Iraq (to see this document go to www.ccr-ny.org, click on "Reports").
3. The weapons inspectors themselves say that at least 95% of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction have been destroyed (www.fair.org/press-releases/kamel.html). Iraqi society has been devastated by the Gulf War and 13 years of sanctions, and the Iraqi military is a mere shadow of the force that it was prior to the Gulf War. We would be making war on a nation of paupers. The threatened hostilities are considered by many to be more of a slaughter than a war, and the only driving force that can be deduced is that the United States feels compelled to take control of the flow of Iraqi oil.
4. It is estimated that a new war with Iraq could cost as much as \$200 billion dollars, and that rebuilding Iraq would cost another \$200 billion dollars. It will take almost all of the discretionary funds out of the U.S. treasury, draining resources from the great pressing needs of our time (poverty, adequate fresh water, education, renewable energy development, population stabilization), and it will disrupt the global economy. (http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2003-01-15-war-cost-usat_x.htm)
5. Another war will spread more depleted uranium (DU) across Iraqi and across the globe. Major Doug Rokke, a U.S. army physicist who describes himself as a "patriot to the right of Rush Limbaugh," calls the use of depleted uranium "a crime against God and a crime against humanity." DU is radioactive, mutagenic and carcinogenic (<http://commondreams.org/headlines02/1112-01.htm>).
6. The Iraqi people have suffered enough. The effect of 13 years of sanctions on Iraqi society has been profound. Two UN humanitarian aid directors, Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponek, have quite their jobs in the past six years, both calling the impact of the sanctions on the Iraqi people "genocide." (www.endiraqsanctions.org)

What can I do about this war?

1. Make your opposition to it known on a daily basis. This will add your voice to those of more than 20 million people around the world who are taking action to prevent this war.
 - A. Contact your two senators and one congressperson on a regular basis and give them a piece of your mind.
 - B. Join or start a weekly vigil against the war in your community.
 - C. Join or start a local organization that educating themselves and the public about issues of peace and justice in today's world.
2. Consider doing civil disobedience (CD) or support someone planning to do CD. If international war crimes are being committed then disobedience is the appropriate response of ethical people. Consider reallocating your tax dollars to life-enhancing endeavors (more about this below).
3. Educate yourself and others on the current situation and the background of the current politics. There is a wealth of material available on the web. Consider joining or starting a community listserve to share information about war and peace.

A Few websites for information on Iraq:

www.endiraqsanctions.org (Seattle-based)
www.vitw.org (Voices in the Wilderness, Chicago)
www.snowcoalition.org (Puget Sound Coalition of 90+ organizations)

Why be concerned about war in general?

1. Human society is at a pivotal time in its history. We are beginning to experience the limits of critical resources, including conventional petroleum and fresh water. While the great pressing issues of our time are ignored, the bulk of the world's discretionary resources are going into military expenditures and war (see www.cdi.org/budget/2004/world-military-spending.cfm). War can not resolve the real needs of our time, but rather it can only waste precious resources, deepen the wounds of the human psyche, and compound the wounds to the biosphere. (Go to www.dieoff.org for a vast array of material on this subject—be sure to scroll down to the article archive)
2. The weapons of war are increasingly deadly and toxic. Many countries are developing weapons of mass destruction, with the United States leading the way (see www.fas.org/irp/threat/wmd_state.htm for a global list, and www.fas.org/irp/threat/wmd_state.htm for a listing of U.S. chemical and biological weapons. Radioactive depleted uranium has now been used in Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia, with test sites in California, Nevada, California, Indiana, Maryland, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, and off the coast of Washington (See graphic at bottom of article at http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/iraq2002/95178_du12.shtml). Uranium has a half-life of 4.5 billion years.
3. War creates physical wounds that last for a lifetime, and psychological wounds that can last for generations. 58,000 Americans died in combat in Vietnam; 70,000 Vietnam veterans have committed suicide since the end of that war. In Vietnam itself 2 million Vietnamese died and 1/3 of the entire country was bombed or sprayed with toxic chemicals (napalm and herbicides). 600,000 American soldiers served in the Gulf War, 200,000 of them are sick with Gulf War syndrome; that's a 1 in 3 rate of disability. These are nightmares we can no longer afford.

What can I do about war in general?

1. Stop paying for it. This might sound radical, but this is the most direct route to a more peaceful and equitable world. We have all been conditioned to believe that it is our duty to stuff money in an envelope every April 15 and send it to a group of men who will probably soon be considered international war criminals, to use as they see fit. A considerable portion of this money is used to build ever more deadly weaponry, to wage wars, and to spread long-lived toxic wastes in the local and global environment. The only reason anyone would fund the destruction of human society and the biosphere is fear. Do you want to live a life ruled by fear, or by love and courage? The more ethical act is to allocate the tax portion of your income to the human and planetary services that you deem to be most needed and effective. (See National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee at www.nwtrcc.org, and War Resisters League at www.warresisters.org for advice on reallocating your taxes).
2. Spend time with one of the groups working for peace in the world's great trouble spots, among which I would count Iraq, Palestine/Israel, and Columbia. For example, investigate Voices in the Wilderness, Witness for Peace and Christian Peacemakers. (www.vitw.org, www.iraqpeaceteam.org, www.witnessforpeace.org, <http://www.prairienet.org/cpt>).
3. Become aware of the process of psychological projection, in which people look for in others elements of themselves that they dislike. Observe the connection between the process of personal projection, and the very similar process of projection that societies engage in. Take responsibility for your own life, your own pain, and your own search for and experience of joy and meaning. (See Sam Keen's *Faces of the Enemy*, and his preface to Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death* for more on projection).

"I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a 'thing oriented' society to a 'person oriented' society...These are the times for real choices and not false ones. We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest." Martin Luther King, 1967