

WAR: OUR COMMON ENEMY

On March 19, 2003, George W. Bush announced the beginning of the latest stage in his war against the Iraqi people—the launching of bombs and missiles over Baghdad; those bombs and missiles have now been joined by a land-based invasion of U.S. forces into Iraqi territory. This overt war is a sharp intensification of the decade of quiet war against the Iraqi people engaged in by the United States. Since the end of the Gulf War, the Iraqi people have been starved and isolated through sanctions; despite having vast natural resources, Iraq has been punished for seeking to control those resources independently—denied access to most trade and thus deprived of not only needed food supplies, but also the necessities of modern life—hospital and medical supplies, medications, and industrial supplies. The internal economy and health care structures of Iraq have been devastated; it is estimated that over one and one-half million Iraqis have died directly due to the sanctions enforced upon Iraq by the United States, with the enforced consent of the United Nations. In addition to the sanctions regime, Iraq has been subject to regular bombings; in the north and south of Iraq, the U.S. and Great Britain unilaterally carved out segments of the country to be labeled as “no-fly zones” and subject to constant military attack.

The attack on Iraq is a violation of international law and a direct repudiation of the United Nations. It is guaranteed to create more death, suffering and destruction for many Iraqis, and also for Americans. Rather than serving as part of a “war on terror,” this unilateral war serves only to terrorize the Iraqi people and create a real and lasting anger against the U.S. government for its illegal, brutal behavior – if anything, it is a war to create, rather than suppress, “terrorism.” The war has been created not out of a desire for “national security,” but rather as a bid for control over Iraq’s natural resources—vast amounts of oil, and water, precious in the Middle East—and the political, social and economic climate of the Middle East and the world. George Bush, following in a long line of U.S. invasions and wars created and promoted to install puppet governments, displace regimes or suppress resistance movements in the Middle East and around the world, has declared the U.S. intentions to install a new government in Iraq, subservient to U.S. interests, after a period of military occupation.

This policy is far from distinct within the Middle East. Indeed, the U.S. war on Iraq is not only similar in nature and conduct to the war of the state of Israel, funded by the United States, against the Palestinian people, but is also closely related in its causes and effects. It is imperative that as citizens and residents of the United States, we unite in resistance to the war on Iraq and the simultaneous war on Palestine. Since 1948, Palestinians have suffered occupation and oppression in what became the state of Israel, living as second-class citizens, with a refugee population now numbering in the millions denied their human right to return to their homes and homeland. Since 1967, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have suffered under a brutal and open military occupation. This Israeli occupation and oppression has been funded, supported and encouraged by the United States; Israel receives over \$3 billion in annual aid (Congress will soon vote on a new \$10 billion aid proposal) and serves as a faithful lackey of U.S. foreign policy, as well as a means of enforcing economic power against the Arab states of the region. Israel’s ongoing repression of the Palestinian people works hand in hand with the U.S. assault on the Iraqi people to enforce U.S. hegemony and military/economic dominance in the region. Indeed, an occupied Iraq is expected to “partner” with Israel as a Middle East ally. It serves to keep the people of the Middle East disunited and struggling for survival, threatened in their very existence should they move for popular control of their natural resources and meaningful democracy and independence from the United States.

In addition, the war on Iraq presents the possibility of dire consequences for the Palestinian people. Much as the war on Iraq serves as a domestic distraction from failing economic policies, severe educational budget cuts, the lack of health care and social services, rising crime and poverty, it serves as a distraction that allows Israel’s brutal repression of the Palestinian people to proceed, aside from the world’s spotlight. In 1989, Benjamin Netanyahu, Finance Minister in the government of war criminal and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, stated that “Israel should have exploited the repression of the demonstrations in China (Tiananmen Square), when world attention focused on that country, to carry out mass expulsions among the Arabs of the territories.” 187 Israeli and 800 American academics signed a statement warning of the dangers of ethnic cleansing in the “fog of war.” Events in recent days indicate this fear is proving correct. The Israeli military has engaged in bloody incursions in Gaza, including an attack on Nuseirat refugee camp that killed eleven. In addition, Rachel Corrie, an American activist with the International Solidarity Movement, a Palestinian-led group of international activists who put their bodies on the line to serve as protectors and supporters of Palestinian nonviolent resistance, was murdered by the Israeli military on Sunday, March 16, as a Caterpillar bulldozer on its way to destroy a Palestinian doctor’s home ran over her as she protested the home demolition. Corrie was the first non-Palestinian ISM activist killed in the organization’s human rights work in Palestine. The killing of Corrie indicates that the Israeli military—once far more cautious around internationals than in its dealings with Palestinians—is now behaving toward impunity with all supporters of Palestinian rights, regardless of nationality.

This week’s murder of Rachel Corrie and numerous other Palestinians stands as one with this week’s murder of Iraqis. Both are egregious violations of international law and justice. The United States and Israel must not be allowed to violate Palestinian and Iraqi human rights for territorial hegemony, control of natural resources and political dominance. NO WAR ON IRAQ! FREEDOM FOR PALESTINE!

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