

Let Iraq and its Children Live

Statement of the Asian Peace Mission on the Impending War on Iraq

Sunday 2 October 2005, by [ALI GONDAL Zulfikar](#), [AMIN Hussin](#), [BELLO Walden](#), [DOCENA Herbert](#), [ROSALES Etta](#), [SARI Dita Indah](#) (Date first published: 19 March 2003).

Damascus,

The Asian Peace Mission to Baghdad denounces in the strongest terms possible the US decision to launch unilateral military action against the peoples of Iraq.

Both US President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair offer as the prime justification for their coming war the "liberation of the Iraqi people." We were just in Baghdad meeting with Iraqi from all walks of life and we did not meet one Iraqi who wanted to be "liberated" by the United States and Great Britain. Indeed, the reaction of most Iraqi to the Bush-Blair rationale of liberation by aggression is most likely the same as that of the young woman at Baghdad University who told us, "We have been invaded for thousands of years, and those bent on conquest always told us that they wanted to liberate us."

Ironically, Washington's declared principal war aim is likely to accomplish exactly its opposite: instead of severing the Iraqi people from their government, it is likely to push them to rally around it.

Washington claims that it is going to war to disarm Saddam Hussein.

This rationale flies in the face of reports from the United Nations inspection panel that the Iraqi government has substantially increased its cooperation in the peaceful disarmament process in the last few weeks.

There is simply no reason to go to war. There is every reason to oppose a war that is not sanctioned by the United Nations.

The rule of international law is the thin wall that separates civilized intercourse among nations from anarchy. Washington's action will throw the world back 60 years. Like Hitler's march into Czechoslovakia in 1938, Washington and London's invasion of Iraq in defiance of the United Nations is an outlaw act with momentous consequences. In the same way that Hitler's move was the last nail on the coffin of the League of Nations, the Anglo-American war against Iraq will destroy the United Nations as an effective force to maintain global peace.

We are angry but we are also sad. In the brief time our mission was in Iraq, we met many Iraqi, made many friends. It is springtime in Baghdad, the season when life renews itself. Yet, many of those we met will lose their lives in the coming war. Indeed, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi are likely to die and many millions more are likely to be wounded or turned into homeless refugees by the unleashing of US military might.

Baghdad is a gem of a city, a place throbbing with life, laughter, and culture. Large parts of this ancient city will surely be flattened and destroyed. So-called precision bombing that avoids large-scale civilian casualties is an illusion. We are likely, instead, to witness innumerable repetitions of

the bombing of the Al-Aamriyya air-raid shelter during the Gulf War in 1991, when a Daisy-cutter bomb tore into many layers of concrete to kill 407 men, women, and children in a horrible firestorm.

We pose to the world the same question that one professor at Baghdad University posed to us: why is the world's most advanced industrial country determined to destroy the world's most ancient civilization?

The desire to control Iraq's oilfields, which contain the second largest proven reserves in the world, is an important reason, but it is not sufficient. There is also the drive to establish a Middle Eastern order that assures the predominance of Israel and a global order where the hegemony of the United States cannot be challenged by any power or combination of powers. But this still does not exhaust the reasons why the US is eager to wage war. For there is also operating at a primordial level the dynamics of power that is in love with itself and expresses this deadly narcissism in the destruction of others.

Washington is hell-bent on aggression, but it should not expect Iraq to be a walkover. Beneath the daily routine of the Iraqi we met was a determination to fight for their country's sovereignty. As one Iraqi told us, "We are a different people from the Iraqi before the Gulf War. By forcing us to rely on ourselves, the years of economic sanctions toughened us." Let Washington and London beware that there are some 7.5 million trained militia members, and many are expected to defend Baghdad block by block. Can there be any doubt that in the face of aggression they are doing the right thing? Under similar circumstances, would not resistance also be our most sacred duty?

Might will be confronted by morale and morality in Baghdad, and might will not be assured of an easy triumph.

War is about to commence. We in the Asian Peace Mission join the world in making one last demand that the US and Great Britain desist from aggression. We do so in the name of the children of Iraq. We demand instead that instead of waging war, they join the rest of the world in lifting the crippling economic sanctions that have turned what was once a population of relatively healthy children into a severely malnourished lot that will be devastated by the impact of what is sure to be a prolonged war.

We appeal to the community of nations to mount one last offensive to pressure the strong not to dismantle the machinery for the maintenance of global peace that has been painstakingly constructed over the last 58 years.

We cannot emphasize too strongly that unless we stand steadfast now against brazen aggression, the fate of Iraq today may well be the fate of the rest of us tomorrow.

We are all Iraqi now.

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