

NGO COMMITTEE CPPS CORPORATE STANCE AGAINST WAR IN IRAQ

In 2002 and again in 2004 we, as a community, took a corporate stance against the war in Iraq. The war began in 2003 and continues to rage on today, five years later. More than 3,942 U.S. military personnel have been killed, and more than 28,000 wounded. More than 80 -88,000 Iraqis have been killed, and there is no count of how many have been wounded. 4,400,000 Iraqis have been displaced, about 2.4 million within Iraq, and another 2 million in surrounding countries. Over \$489,681,172,213 has been spent on the war. So we as an NGO Committee asked ourselves, "Where to now with this corporate stance against the Iraq War?" And so, we began investigating.

We contacted Sr. Lucianne Siers, OP, director of Partnership for Global Justice where we learned that in early January the Dominican Motherhouse was bombed in Mosul. Luckily, none of the sisters were hurt. Three Churches, two in Baghdad and one in Mosul and one Chaldean convent in Baghdad were damaged as well. The war has not died down for Iraqis. It seems that recently there has been a concerted effort against Christians. Sr. Lucianne, likewise, directed us to two of their recent ACTION ALERTS regarding the plight of Iraqi refugees.

In addition we received information from a group of eight women religious from NETWORK who went to Syria and Lebanon with a Catholic Relief Services delegation to learn about the status of Iraqi refugees in those countries. Syria has 1.2-1.4 million refugees (at least 10 percent of its population) and Lebanon has between 20-40,000 Iraqi refugees (plus 400,000 Palestinian refugees). Until recently Syria had open borders for the refugees, but now they have had to close them. After 4 days in each country, the delegation reported on January 26 in a telephone conference about the fear and destitution of the refugees. In one Refugee Retention center located underground, under a highway in Beirut, Lebanon, refugees are kept in thirteen 40'x20' cells that look like cages, 40+ people to a cell. They receive bread and cheese twice a day. Three hot meals per week are provided by Caritas International. It was appalling! The delegation left the center in silence. There is a lack of health care. No one knows what will happen next. They never go outside. There are no windows. The delegation felt a sense of shame being from the U.S. as they looked at the results/consequences of this War.

The Iraqi refugee situation is a massive crisis. We need to insist that our US Government take responsibility for this tragedy, to develop immediate and long-term plans to tackle this humanitarian disaster, and aid the millions of desperate people uprooted by the violence in Iraq. The US must also contribute to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees which is seeking \$261 million this year to help Iraqi refugees. The issues are complex and highly volatile. Refugees cannot work because they do not have documents. They are completely dependent on Religious groups, NGO groups and refugee centers in the host country. The countries are unable to provide for them. Yet, most of the refugees interviewed did not want to return to Iraq out of fear. Some never want to return. One Good Shepherd sister was quoted as saying, "We don't need money; we need peace in Iraq. This war is a crime against humanity."

Where to now? ***HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO!***

Pray, pray, pray (for the refugees, those trying to service them, etc.)

Read the next issue (March/April) of *CONNECTIONS*, the NETWORK magazine, which will be about the Iraqi refugees.

Write to President G. Bush (Sample letter attached)

Write to your member of Congress regarding Congressman Blumenauer's bill, H.R.2265, Responsibility to Iraqi Refugees Act. To find your representative's name, go to www.house.gov (Sample letter attached)

Write to your senators. To find your senators' names, go to www.senate.gov (Sample letter attached)

Donate to Catholic Relief Service (We will collect donations at our March 1, 2008 Community Day.)

See SAMPLE LETTERS below

(Date)

President George Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear President Bush,

I have recently become aware of the plight of almost 2 million displaced persons in Iraq and of the more than 2 million Iraqi refugees in other countries. The daily news indicates that the war is calming down, but the terrible suffering of the people continues without relief. Let's end this war. The people want peace. Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your name
And address)

(Date)

(Your representative's name)
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear

I have recently become aware of the plight of the more than 4.4 million displaced Iraqi persons. The war seems to us to have calmed down, but the terrible suffering of the Iraqi people continues without relief. What is Congress doing to help the Iraqi refugees? Let's end this war. The people want peace. Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name
And address)

(Date)

(Your Senator's Name
And address)
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear

I have recently become aware of the plight of the more than 4.4 million displaced Iraqi persons. The war seems to us to have calmed down, but the terrible suffering of the people continues without relief. What is the Senate doing to help the Iraqi refugees? Let's end this war. The people want peace. Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your name
And address)