

## Resolution

### Human Rights Abuses by U. S.-Led Coalition Provisional Authority Forces in Iraq

#### *Theological Reflection:*

*"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5 )*

Peggy Gish, a member of the Christian Peacemakers Team (CPT) in Iraq, shared this reflection on their involvement in Iraq one year after the beginning of the war.

"What does this scripture passage say to us in this society torn by violence?"

"We didn't want to get caught into a mindset that bought into it, got stuck in it, and could no longer see possibilities for creative action. We did not want the culture of fear and hopelessness to paralyze us and to swallow up the light in this intense unleashing of violence."

"Do we make statements of faith and then let the darkness creep into our consciousness? Do we let the darkness take over and shape our worldview and lead us to believe that the answer to the world's problems lies with having superior force or that this war is the only way to deal with or get rid of an evil dictator? Christians even create theologies of how Jesus could not have really meant that we should love our enemy or that he could not have meant that nonviolent, suffering love was more powerful than violence or evil."

"In our work today, we resist getting caught in the mindset of the occupation system, which sees the Iraqi people through the eyes of fear and suspicion. We resist seeing either Iraqi or US soldiers as our enemies or believing that violence is the only way to combat terrorism."

"Is it possible to walk, live, and work in a system of horrendous overt and structural violence without being overcome by it? How can we do it today here in Iraq, the U.S. - or any other nation?"

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**Whereas** the U.S. claimed the war would liberate the Iraqi people from a regime which abused their human rights, and

**Whereas** human rights activists around the world came together on March 20, 2004 to remember the beginning of the war and military occupation of Iraq, and a number of Iraqi and international human rights organizations have also joined efforts in Baghdad to declare that the Iraqi people still live without freedom and without human rights, and

**Whereas** human rights groups have sponsored "Days of Solidarity with Iraqi People Suffering Under Occupation," outlining the human rights abuses under the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority, and

**Whereas** human rights groups report that Coalition officials have failed to compensate families for killings of civilians or destruction of civilian property.

**Whereas** human rights groups are also reporting abuses and lack of due process for Iraqi detainees in U.S. -led Coalition Provisional Authority prison camps--including the withholding of information from family members about the state of detainees' health or the charges against them.

**Whereas** members of Christian Peacemakers Teams have reported accounts of incidents of night-time raids, physical abuse, destruction and theft of property, killings and detention by soldiers and officers of the U.S. -led Coalition Provisional Authority,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT**

**London Conference petition the Executive or sub-Executive of General Council of The United Church of Canada:**

1. to issue an urgent appeal:
  - a. to protest and lament the human rights abuses in Iraq, reported by the Christian Peacemakers Team and subsequently confirmed in news reports, under the occupation by the Coalitional Provisional Authority, and to call for an end to abuses; and
  - b. to call for an end to the lack of due process for Iraqi detainees in U.S. -led Coalition Provisional Authority prison camps--including the withholding of information from family members about the state of detainees' health or the charges against them, and
  - c. to call for compensation to families for killings of civilians or destruction of civilian property.
2. to appeal to the Government of Canada to protest these abuses by members of the U.S. -led Coalition Provisional Authority to the administrative and political officials of the members of the Coalition Provisional Authority.
3. to urge the Government of Canada to advocate through international diplomacy for just and humane treatment of detainees and for an end to abuses of the people of Iraq.