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**What is C.A.N?**

**We are an independent, democratic, grassroots network of campus-based anti-war committees.**

- We stand opposed to all US wars of aggression.**
- We stand opposed to the occupation of Iraq under the auspices of the United Nations or any other foreign power.**
- We support the right of the Iraqi people to self-determination.**
- We demand the immediate withdrawal of all troops from Iraq.**
- We demand that the US government pay reparations to the Iraqi people.**
- We oppose the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and call for the immediate withdrawal of all US troops.**
- We stand opposed to the oppression of the Palestinian people and the occupation of Palestinian land, and support the right of Palestinians to self-determination.**
- We stand opposed to racist scapegoating and all attacks on civil liberties.**
- We demand money for education, jobs and healthcare, not war and occupation!**

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## **The Case for Immediate Withdrawal from Iraq by New York University's Campus Anti-War Network**

The brutality of what it means to occupy another country is on full display in Iraq—even the mainstream press can't ignore the reality of life for ordinary Iraqis and for those standing up to join the resistance and kick the United States out of their country.

The US government conducted an illegal war of conquest against Iraq. The real reasons for invasion had nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction, getting rid of Saddam Hussein, or the "liberation" of an oppressed people.

The US has two intentions in Iraq: one, to gain control of Iraqi resources (most obviously oil) and give the green light to corporations like Halliburton and Bechtel to set up shop in Iraq; and two, to use Iraq as an example of the fact that the US calls the shots in the Middle East and any ruler or people that stands in the way will pay a deadly price. The Bush administration went to war in order to occupy Iraq and now the US is attempting to consolidate that occupation with a U.S.-led puppet government and Iraqi police force.

And – with 100,000 Iraqis dead<sup>1</sup>, over 2000 killed in Fallujah in the past month<sup>2</sup>, – this year has left no doubt as to how far the US is willing to go to carry out its interests. We have witnessed gut-wrenching displays of torture in Abu Ghraib and the U.S. bombing of wedding parties, hospitals, and civilian houses. Now they are demolishing entire cities where the resistance has bases.

*This horror can only end through the immediate withdrawal of US troops.*

Anything short of this demand inevitably means more war, more brutality, more torture, and more death of both Iraqis and US soldiers.

The US government, in its quest for oil and empire, has no good intentions in Iraq. Nor can the occupation be altered into a benevolent force by supplanting US soldiers with so-called UN "peacekeepers." In order to ensure corporate control over the entire country, the US is hoping to engage in a phased withdrawal of US troops by bringing in the UN and foreign troops, setting up sham elections in January, and paving the way for a puppet government that will rule in US interests.

Unfortunately, many anti-war activists see the process of phased withdrawal as a way forward for Iraq. In this article, we argue that this is wrong on two counts. First, it misses the reality of what the U.S. is doing in Iraq. The U.S. occupation is responsible for the death, torture, and immiseration of countless Iraqis, as well as of the soldiers forced to carry out that violence. It is impossible to look at pictures of the assault in Fallujah and argue that the occupation must continue to prevent "chaos" in Iraq. The occupation *is* chaos, and it is also the planned and inevitable violence of an occupying force trying to break the resistance of the people it occupies. Every day that the U.S. occupies Iraq, it makes life worse for the Iraqi people. If we say now that the U.S. forces must stay because things are too bad to leave, then what will we say in six months, when their continued presence has made things much worse? By failing to grasp that the U.S. is the source of the terrible problems in Iraq, and could not be otherwise, the argument for "withdrawal later" becomes an argument for "withdrawal never," and has the effect of serving as a left-wing cover for the U.S. to solidify its dominance over Iraqis.

Second, we will argue that the arguments against immediate withdrawal rest on mistaken ideas that Iraqis are not as capable of governing themselves as any other group of people. Our conclusion is that only an *immediate* withdrawal of all US troops has any hope of bringing democracy and freedom to the Iraqi people.

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts, Les, et al. "Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey." *The Lancet*, Volume 364 Issue 9448 Page 1857

<sup>2</sup> Qassem Daoud, Iraq Secretary of State of National Security, Nov 26, 2004, Baghdad.

*What does "phased withdrawal" really mean?*

We saw variants of this demand about a year ago at protests where some demonstrators held up signs that said "US out UN in." We hear about it today, as well - the Win Without War Coalition, for instance, calls for a phased withdrawal. This is advocated as a "more practical" alternative to immediate withdrawal that will better appeal to Americans. What this argument misses is the current goal of the US in Iraq, that is, to engage in a phased withdrawal in order to legitimize the occupation by setting up a puppet government. A successful phased withdrawal will serve only to legitimize the US assertion of its massive dominance over the wishes of the Iraqi people. We, instead, want the US to fail in subverting Iraqi sovereignty and for the US military to be kicked out of that country, leaving no US-imposed governmental structure in place.

A US-imposed regime could include any government selected, appointed, or funded by the US or its allies – including Arab states that maintain their power through US governmental support, or “multilateral” forces such as the United Nations.

The United Nations is governed by the interests of the Security Council, where the most powerful countries in the world make all decisions. The UN eventually endorsed this brutal occupation (in a 14-0 vote), under an agreement that France and Russia would be paid the bulk of Saddam Hussein’s \$400 billion international debt. The UN now serves to legitimize the US occupation under the cover of “multilateralism.”

The US also used the so-called “transfer of power” on June 30th as a step in their phased withdrawal. In reality, the “transfer of power” meant the appointment of Iyad Allawi behind closed doors and the selection of John Negroponte as US Ambassador to Iraq. Now the U.S. hopes to use elections – which, carried out by the occupying power, are guaranteed to be anything but democratic – as the latest strategy to legitimize its Iraqi puppets, co-opt certain resistance leaders, and serve as a cover for assassinating others. Thus, the elections are no step toward ending the occupation, but rather another strategy for carrying it out, and continuing to solidify U.S. interests in Iraq at the expense of the Iraqi people.

The US consistently tries to confuse people into believing that it is in the process of withdrawing its influence from Iraq - that these are all steps towards Iraqi autonomy - and the UN has served to add another layer to the confusion, as long as other powerful countries can get a piece of the economic pie.

So we face a choice: the US can withdraw on its own terms, or on ours. It will either withdraw after setting up an Iraqi police force that is strong enough to carry out US wishes, or in defeat, giving the Iraqi people a real chance at democracy.

It is crucial that the anti-war movement not support the Bush administration’s plans for phased withdrawal -- and instead demand the immediate withdrawal of all US troops. If we opposed the invasion of Iraq and believe that the US has absolutely no right to be there, then we must also call for the immediate withdrawal of US troops and a defeat for the Bush administration, his corporate cronies, and any other government body that wishes to legitimize the deaths of innocent Iraqis and US soldiers. And in order for imperialism to be defeated in Iraq we must support unconditionally the demand for Iraq’s self-determination – meaning, Iraqis (and only Iraqis) have the right to decide their future and what their country looks like.

*The case for self-determination*

Resistance is the justified reaction to a country occupied by the largest military force in the world. Evidence suggests what is shaping up in Iraq is a popular national resistance against the occupation.

We may disagree with their tactics – for example, indiscriminate bombings of civilians is counterproductive to building popular support for the fight against the occupation – but we must first and foremost stand in complete solidarity with the Iraqis fight to kick the US and all that it brings out of their country.

The resistance hopes to free Iraq from the daily and deadly war waged upon them without choice. We must support their right to resist in any way they decide to do so. It is fundamentally a question posed to anti-war activists: "Which side are you on?" We must choose the side of the Iraqis. The US occupiers and the Iraqi resistance have diametrically opposed interests. The US will stop at nothing to maintain control of Iraq to carry out its imperialist interests, even if it means crushing the resistance and using US soldiers as cannon fodder.

The Iraqi people, the US soldiers, and most people in this country have a common interest in defeating the US government in Iraq. US soldiers and Iraqis are paying with their lives for a war that benefits only the rich. Billions of dollars are taken out of our pockets while we watch our schools crumble, our tuition increase, and our health care become privatized.

When the Bush administration began its invasion in March of 2003, they thought it would be a cakewalk. Instead they have been met with a resistance that only continues to grow the bloodier the occupation gets. For every resistance fighter shot down, two more will join. It is this resistance that has stalled US imperial projects elsewhere in the Middle East and has created a political crisis for the Bush administration that they hoped to stamp out in Fallujah but is proving far more difficult.

### *An occupation propped up with racism*

Racism plays a critical role in legitimizing US occupations around the world. Epithets spewed from the Bush administration and the media when speaking of ordinary Iraqis reflect such racism: "terrorist," "fanatic," "extremist," "insurgent," "fundamentalist." How ironic that George W. Bush, a man who believes he is appointed by God, calls Iraqis "fundamentalists."

These words imply that the culture that exists in the Middle East is inherently insignificant compared to that of the Northwestern world. It is these "culturalist" ideas that are a fundamental tool used by those who are pro-occupation for keeping their interests intact throughout the duration of the war. The conclusion of these ideas is often an argument that the US cannot pull out of Iraq because "chaos" will inevitably ensue or that Islamic countries are somehow incapable of democracy.

By depicting the culture as violent and unruly, they instead propagate the notion that Iraqis are fundamentally unable to govern themselves. Thus, the seeds of the pro-occupation mindset are sown. We in the antiwar movement then find ourselves pitted against each other politically, believing that the occupation cannot end because the country would be thrown into chaos. What this misses is that the US government is the sole source of chaos in Iraq. In fact, the US occupation depends on divisions among racial and ethnic lines in order to maintain power, since playing up these divisions is the best way to prevent a united national liberation movement. This is a classic "divide and conquer" strategy used historically by colonial occupiers.

This doesn't mean that everyone who makes this argument is racist – although unambiguous racists certainly do argue it. For example, an article in the *Journal of Current History* muses, "Could it be that something particular to the Arab world makes it especially allergic to democracy or incapable of practicing it? ... [I]t is impossible to refute this supposition categorically until we have our first functioning Arab democracy."<sup>3</sup> This is obviously racist, and moreover, it's a sentiment that everyone in the antiwar movement rightly finds repulsive. So the point isn't that the people we meet at our tablings echoing this argument are all bigots, but rather that *the racism against Arabs and Muslims that our country is steeped in serves to obscure the fundamental dynamic of the occupation*. That fundamental dynamic is imperialism and colonialism on one side, and a basic democratic right to self-determination on the other.

The British occupation of Northern Ireland provides a useful counterpoint. The population there is Catholic, a religion that oppresses women in many parts of the world. But where are the left-wing voices and the women's groups in the U.S. calling for Britain to stay in Northern Ireland, because otherwise a Catholic government might come to power and oppress women? Actually, no

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<sup>3</sup> Muravchik, Joshua, "Bringing Democracy to the Arab World," *Journal of Current History*, January 15, 2004. Available online: <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=11768>

one on the Left makes that argument – because the colonial nature of that occupation is clear. Our job as the antiwar movement should be to make it similarly clear about Iraq.

*What if the U.S. leaves and Islamists take power?*

An argument we often hear at our tablings on campus is that immediate withdrawal is too dangerous because it could allow an Islamist government to come to power, and, in particular, that this would result in the oppression of Iraqi women.

It is important to start by stating that there's nothing inherent about Islam that makes its adherents gravitate toward sexism or oppressive ideas. Moreover, there is nothing inherent about Muslims that leads them toward Islamism as the only political response to imperialism.

In fact, the resistance in Iraq currently encompasses a wide range of ideas, some Islamist, some not. While it's very hard in the U.S. to access information about what the Iraqi resistance is really like, one thing that is clear: the U.S. government wants to paint the entirety of it as led by a small number of Islamist leaders from outside Iraq. In reality, though, the resistance seems to be primarily a national liberation movement informed by a variety of ideas. For example, although the Islamist Abu Musab Zarqawi is constantly publicized in the U.S. as the leader of the Iraqi resistance, Iraqi exile Sami Ramadani has noted that in September, while there were 2,700 attacks on U.S. and U.S.-puppet forces in Iraq, Zarqawi had claimed credit for exactly six of them.<sup>4</sup>

Many who argue against the possibility of immediate withdrawal reference the oppression of women under Islamic governments. The argument goes that when the US withdraws, Islamism will most likely take hold, and women will pay the price. But the greatest disaster would be for the antiwar movement in the U.S. to be misled into a pro-war position by the idea that our government will make things better for women in Iraq.

This idea has been promulgated through the U.S. war and occupation in Afghanistan – a war that many mainstream women's rights groups in the U.S. celebrated. It is worth taking a closer look, however, at the condition of women in Afghanistan today. Large numbers of women and young girls still face rape by members of armed warlord gangs, forced marriages, violence within their homes, and fear of attending school. In the recent "election" (widely noted as a sham when the ink meant to prevent voter fraud turned out to be removable), many women reported being unable to vote without permission from their husbands.

Women's liberation in Iraq, and Afghanistan, will have to come in tandem with a broader struggle against imperialism. It may begin with women demanding their place as equal members of the struggle to kick the U.S. out – and uniting men and women the way the struggle against the occupation has already given rise to striking instances of unity between Sunni and Shiite Muslims in Iraq, for example.

Moreover, the condition of women cannot be separated from the overall context of the occupation and the devastation it has wrought on the people of Afghanistan. The average life expectancy for adults dropped from 46 in 2001 to 43 in 2004. Only 9 percent of Afghans have access to electricity, and 6 percent to safe drinking water. An estimated one woman dies every twenty minutes in pregnancy or childbirth.<sup>5</sup>

No one could confuse this with liberation – for women or for men. This is equally true of Afghanistan and Iraq. Thousands of Iraqis die every week, their homes blown into pieces, and their children dead from starvation and illness. There is rampant unemployment, little access to basic foods, entire cities without electricity, and a refugee crisis beyond belief.

Bush has no mandate for such brutality and it is our responsibility to let him know.

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<sup>4</sup> Ramadani, Sami, "The true face of Iraqi resistance," *The Guardian*, available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1316000,00.html>

<sup>5</sup> All Afghanistan statistics from: Dwyer, Katherine, "Afghanistan's Endless War," *International Socialist Review*, September-October 2004. Available online: <http://www.isreview.org/issues/37/afghanistan.shtml>

Our stand is simple but must be firm – Iraq is for Iraqis. Only the immediate withdrawal of US troops can bring any real possibility of democracy in the Middle East. This means the U.S. must be *defeated* in its aim to occupy Iraq as a step to dominating the whole world. We will contribute to this defeat – by building protests here at home that carry our demand: that not one more human being should die for oil at the hands of George W. Bush.

## **The Jews Are Not Enemies Taysir – West Bank, Palestine**

For me, as a Palestinian, the Jews are not enemies. Even the term religious conflict is not used in Palestine. It is a myth created by the Zionists to gain the support of the worldwide Jewish community and to protect the idea of the expansion of the state of Israel (as some say, from the Nile in Egypt to the Euphrates in Iraq as the Zionist state)

Recent Palestinian and Israeli grassroots level cooperation is strong proof that the conflict is not based on religion, and that there are possibilities of living together in peace and justice in one state. Just this last year, Israeli peaceniks in Gush Shalom (the Israeli peace bloc) and the Israeli Anarchists Against the Wall have come to dozens of demonstrations, protests, and meetings held in Palestinian villages and towns against the occupation and, in particular, the destructive wall.

This land is able to contain the people who have been living in it for centuries. Everyone admits that there were Jews living in Palestine as well as the Muslims and Christians. The Zionists who are using propaganda and misinformation to transfer the Palestinians from their lands in order to perpetuate a Jewish-only state in the name of all the Jewish people worldwide, must own the facts: they have historical partners whose rights to exist as fellow human beings must be recognized.

There are many Israelis who believe in those facts and they are not silent. They are the civilian Israeli grassroots groups and they come to the Occupied Territories to join the non-violent struggle and activities against the occupation, against the policies of their government, and against the construction of the apartheid wall. The wall does not only cause land theft and confiscation, it also apartheid and separation. Like every part of the occupation, it is anti-humanity and the killing of any opportunity for our peoples to live together.

It is true that the idea of one state is still in its first steps of a journey. There are people, even if they are not the majority, who want it. In fact, in the 1940s Jewish thinkers like Judah Magnes (first President of Hebrew University), Hannah Arendt and Martin Buber were calling for a single, bi-national state in all of Palestine. And in the 1970s, the PLO wanted a singular, democratic state for all residents of the pre-1948 Palestine. Today, we know that the ones who are refusing this idea are the very beneficiaries who enjoy huge economic and geo-political gains from Israeli policy. These people include the arms traders, construction industries, corrupt politicians, and colonialists.

We have enough determination for continuing and cooperating together; Jews, Muslims, Christians, Arabs, Israelis and all people who want to achieve the best for ourselves and generations to come.

Another issue is the Palestinians who are living in Israel: they are facing racism as their rights are not fully recognized. Since 1948 they have been neglected, discriminated against, and at the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada, even killed by Israeli soldiers. They are still struggling for their social rights and justice; we are fellow human beings, our demands are legal and recognized under international law, including UN resolution 242, and our case is just: we want a fair life and for our human rights to be defended.

One state for everybody to live in is the only chance for insuring the right of return of the refugees. By itself, neither the West Bank nor Gaza has the resources (infrastructure, arable land and potable water, employment, housing and so on) to absorb all the refugees. Yet, their cause is just in wanting to go back to their lands and homes. The building of the wall in the West Bank is destroying the viability and separating Palestinian communities from each other.

So which kind of state is going to be given for the Palestinians and what are the possibilities of its life? Even without walls its not viable to have a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders for many reasons; our life and the right of return are not achievable; Jerusalem and its future; the settlements and the complex nature of their existence; and lastly the shared humanity of Palestinians and Israelis demand being together in a single, just and peaceful society.

In addition to all of this, I would say that the Jews all over the world are responsible for what is done in their name. They should protect it from the criminal acts of Zionist governments, such as collective punishments, house demolitions, land confiscations, and the brutality of soldiers. The initiative to reclaim the socialist and prophetic roots of Judaism (the rhetorical foundation of the state of Israel) needs to come from the Jewish people or else they will remain complicit in the atrocities being carried out in their name.

The international community is also responsible because there are people - human beings - brothers and sisters - facing an apartheid regime and separation. They are oppressed and the oppressor is a government breaking the international law daily - for decades and still today as it flouts the decision of the Hague which declared the wall in Palestine illegal and subject to revision.

People on both sides are victims of the occupation and they are the ones who should decide their future. It is possible to have one state with equal rights for everybody on the principles of the justice, peace and democracy.

Taysir is a long-time peace activist born in Salfit region and living in the West Bank, Palestine.

## **The War *of* Terror** **Bekah Ward – Cornell University**

What is this strange and powerful buzz word used to legitimize our ruler's actions, this "War on Terror?" It sounds quite reasonable, on the surface. Terror is bad, so we should wage war on it, right? Think again. As was said often at its inception, war on terror is a war of terror. But understanding the nature of this war has been lost by the left. The liberal bastion *Common Dreams* recently ran an article entitled "Iraq War Diverting Resources from the war on terror" (in case you didn't know, it's supposed to be a bad thing to have limited resources for the war on terror). In June of 2002 National Organization of Women (NOW) published a resolution opposing the "opportunistic use of fighting terrorism as an excuse for massive military expansion, for a war on Iraq, and for the continuation of unilateral policies in violation of international law."<sup>1</sup> The very next year NOW opines, "We believe that our government should focus its attention on eliminating terrorism and bringing to justice the perpetrators of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks."<sup>2</sup> What happened? The reason for the left's collapse in the face of this phrase deserves an article by itself. But the urgent task before the left is rebuilding our opposition to the war on terror. And opposition to this outrage follows naturally from looking below the surface, the words, and investigating the deeds, the reality of the war on terror.

The US State Department has a publication entitled "Winning the war on terror" extolling the grand accomplishments of this monstrosity in Afghanistan and Iraq. Iraq is supposedly an example of the success of the war on terror because the US has "defeated a regime that developed and used weapons of mass destruction, that harbored and supported terrorists, committed outrageous human rights abuses, and defied the just demands of the United Nations and the World."<sup>3</sup> But this statement smells of hypocrisy. Nuclear weapons have been used for war only twice, both times by the US on Japan. Hoping to counter the USSR's influence in Afghanistan, the US government provided the support and training to make the Taliban possible. The US committed the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.now.org/nnt/fall-2002/resolutions.html](http://www.now.org/nnt/fall-2002/resolutions.html)

<sup>2</sup> [www.now.org/issues/global/031103ncwo.html](http://www.now.org/issues/global/031103ncwo.html)

<sup>3</sup> [www.state.gov/documents/organization/24172.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/24172.pdf)



horrifying abuses of the Abu Ghraib torture. And the UN Secretary General has come out firmly calling the US invasion of Iraq “illegal.” So the hypocrisy is blatant. The death tolls tell volumes. Conservative estimates put Iraqi civilian deaths due to the invasion as of September 2004 at 100,000 (this number excludes Falluja) whereas US military casualties were just reaching 1,000 at that time.<sup>4</sup> This demonstrates that the war on terror is actually a war on innocent civilians of countries targeted by the rulers of the US and its allies. The faces of the war on terror are those of an Iraqi torture victim, and an Iraqi child shot at a checkpoint. The perpetrators of this war either paint this side of the conflict as an oh-so-sorry mistake or laugh it off. George Bush jokes with the press by looking for weapons of mass destruction under his sofa and declaring, “Nope, not there either.” But to Iraqis, the decimation of their country is no joking matter.

And what of Afghanistan, the other success in the war on terror? The use of cluster bombs during the initial fighting in Afghanistan indicates clearly that the US was not interested in protecting civilians. But not only were military forces not protecting civilians, they sometimes targeted them. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002, 48 Afghan civilians were killed and over 100 wounded when the US bombed a wedding in Uruzgan. And the US has not brought the promised democracy or stability either. In some parts of the country, the fighting between the various warlords is so severe people cannot leave their homes. An Afghan woman, Tajwa Kakur, spoke out to UK reporters from *The Independent* about the replacement of the Taliban with the new rulers of Afghanistan: the Warlords. She called them, “just Taliban in ties.”<sup>5</sup> Life expectancy for adults has dropped from 46 in 2001 to 43 in 2004. Fourteen percent of Afghan children die before they reach the age of five. In 2004 only six percent of Afghans have access to safe drinking water and only nine percent have access to electricity.<sup>6</sup> The director of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, Dr. Sima Samar, says many of the old human rights violations continue such as arbitrary detention, forced marriage, land grabbing and torture. But these have been augmented by the US force’s violations. “We had a similar case (to Abu Ghraib) in Gardez. ... We sent a letter to coalition forces in Kabul, but unfortunately they did not reply.”<sup>7</sup> And the UN has recently put out a warning about high heroine overdose rates to be expected next year do to the remarkably pure heroin coming out of Afghanistan, whose heroin production jumped 64% last year.<sup>8</sup> That means around 5,000 tons of opium will be gathered in Afghanistan come spring. These, Iraq and Afghanistan, are the “success” stories of the war on terror.

It is clear that the price of the war on terror is paid by Iraqi and Afghan civilians. But there are others, held against their will in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba who are also casualties of this war: prisoners held for months or years without basic human needs such as food, water and safety from physical harm. In March, 2002 five prisoners - all British nationals - were released and gave an inside view of Camp X-Ray in Guantanamo to the British newspaper *The Mirror*. According to Jamal Al-Harith, a Guantanamo inmate for two years, they had “filthy” water and “the food was terrible as well, up to 10 years out of date.”<sup>9</sup> Interrogation techniques included chaining prisoners to a metal ring on the floor. “In Camp X-Ray, my cage was right next to a kennel housing an Alsatian dog. He had a wooden house with air conditioning and green grass to exercise on. I said to the guards ‘I want his rights’ and they replied, ‘that dog is a member of the US Army.’” The US claims these 5 men were associated with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Yet they were released after the hellish detention without any formal charges. Their stories were corroborated by Afghan and Pakistani prisoners who

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<sup>4</sup> Roberts, Les, et al. “Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey.” *The Lancet*, Volume 364 Issue 9448 Page 1857. October 24, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Walter, Natsha. “The War on Terror is also a War of Terror.” *Conscious Choice*. May 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Dwyer, Katherine. “Afghanistan’s Endless War.” *International Socialist Review*. Issue 37, September-October 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with the UN’s Integrated Regional Information Networks. December 22, 2004. Available online: [http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=44775&SelectRegion=Central\\_Asia&SelectCountry=AFGHANISTAN](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=44775&SelectRegion=Central_Asia&SelectCountry=AFGHANISTAN)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2004/unisnar874.html>

<sup>9</sup> Rosa Prince and Gary Jones. “My Hell in Camp X-Ray.” *The Mirror*. May 12, 2004.

were released later.<sup>10</sup> It took human rights groups a massive mobilization to force the US to release the three children between the ages 13 and 15 held at Guantanamo in January, 2004. There remain an unknown number of children between 16 and 18 at the base. These prisoners are being held without due process, a clear violation of the Geneva Convention, but the US is making much of the loophole that they are not, technically, prisoners of war. Hence the conveniently nebulous nature of a war on terror.

But what about the toll of this war at home? If the idea of the war on terror is to make the US population safer, then what are the effects of this war on US soil. This war has shredded civil liberties, induced hate crimes, prompted the detention of unknown numbers of immigrants, and increased racial and ethnic profiling in general. The USA PATRIOT Act, carried through as an essential component of the war on terror has some interesting provisions that do not make anyone safer. Section 802 of this Act states that it is a federal crime of domestic terrorism if a citizen or alien commit acts “dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws,” if they “appear to intended... (to) influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion.” Nancy Chang, a spokesperson from the Center for Constitutional Rights indicated that this provision could be applied to any and all protesters, making them “vulnerable to prosecution as domestic terrorists.”<sup>11</sup> The PATRIOT Act also allows the use of secret evidence in a trial and denies any immigration detainee a right to counsel, both violations of the Sixth Amendment. Many of the domestic aspects of the war on terror have their most devastating impact on immigrants.

In the Post-9/11 climate of “terror” and endless “war,” one is not even safe when attempting to follow the letter of the law. Mohammed Ali left his home in New Jersey to register with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and seven months later, he had still not returned. That time was spent in New Jersey’s Elizabeth Detention Center. He, like many other immigrants seeking asylum, was detained without charges for months. And these arrests and detentions continue with government figures stopping at 1,200 when they refused to release any more data. David Cole of Georgetown University sets the figure around 4,000-5,000, all of these “preventative arrests” of immigrants in the aftermath of Sept 11.<sup>12</sup> There was another surge of questioning and intimidation by the FBI around the 2004 election. Some people were even brave enough to step forward and make complaints about the FBI tactics to the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) that maintains a website for “incident reports.” But the scapegoating of Arabs and Muslims shows no signs of letting up. The Customs and Border Protection Division of the Homeland Security Department requested extensive census data be tabulated in 2002 and 2003 detailing Arab-American demographics. Ostensibly, this data was collected in order to provide signs in Arabic in airports. How thoughtful. The report included listings of all US cities with over 1,000 Arab-Americans and a second listing breaking down by zip code and ancestral nationality their location. In December 2002 the Senate Finance Committee requested confidential tax and financial records of 27 Muslim charities and foundations.<sup>13</sup> They justified this request by claiming that these charities “finance terrorism and perpetuate violence.” One such group is Kind Hearts – a charity whose “fundamental beliefs” include the encouragement and promotion of “the impoverished with the means to obtain a more secure future for themselves and their families.” The group, whose mission as “a non-profit charitable organization providing immediate disaster relief and establishing programs to improve the quality of life and foster future independence for those in need,”<sup>14</sup> is now the subject of official harassment most likely for the single reason that its operators pray toward Mecca. Grassley’s committee demanded that Everson turn over “all IRS materials -including

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<sup>10</sup> “People the Law Forgot,” *Guardian*, Dec 3, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Chang, Nancy. *Silencing Political Dissent*. New York: Seven Stories Press. 2002. at 43.

<sup>12</sup> Fahim, Kareem. “The Moving Target – Profiles in Racism.” *Amnesty Now*, published by Amnesty International USA. [http://www.amnestyusa.org/amnestynow/racial\\_profiling.html](http://www.amnestyusa.org/amnestynow/racial_profiling.html)

<sup>13</sup> Senator Charles Grassley to IRS Chairman Mark Everson, Jan 14, 2004. Available online: <http://grassley.senate.gov/releases/2004/p04r01-14a.htm>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.kind-hearts.org/ramadhan/KH\\_mission.htm](http://www.kind-hearts.org/ramadhan/KH_mission.htm)

information protected by Section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code.”<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly all of this official persecution has gone hand in hand with an increase in hate crimes. These acts on the part of the FBI and Homeland Security actively legitimize hate crimes. According to CAIR’s “The Status on Muslim Civil Rights in the US in 2004”, reports of harassment, violence, and discrimination increased nearly 70% over 2002. The number of hate crimes doubled and allegations of mistreatment by federal or local law enforcement accounted for one third of all the reported incidents.

Although the vast majority of those affected by Washington’s terrorist rhetoric are of Middle Eastern or Southeast Asian decent, other populations have been affected too. According to the US Census Bureau, there are approximately 33 million immigrants in the US, between 8 and 14 million of them living in the country without legal status. More than 45 percent of all immigrants entering the US are Mexicans, who account for a substantially larger share of the undocumented. An amendment to the USA PATRIOT Act brought before Congress last year enabled local cops to enforce immigration laws. It included an exemption from any liability for acts carried out in detaining the undocumented, giving the police free hand. The Justice Department filed “terrorism” charges on twenty-eight Latinos working illegally in the Austin, Texas airport. Their terrorism took the form of possessing fabricated Social Security numbers.<sup>16</sup> Filipino immigrants have been detained upon suspicion of being associated with the Communist Party of the Philippines, according to Gary Leupp, a Tufts University History professor and coordinator of their Asian Studies Program. Transgender activists, such as Dean Spade of the Silvia Rivera Law Project, have also noted a sharp increase in the number of gender profiling, especially at airports.<sup>17</sup> Airport security has been instructed to detain any “man dressed as a woman” on suspicion of terrorism. In short, the contagion of attacks on civil liberties is spreading, and fast.

When politicians stand before us and declare their intention of fighting a better war on terror, let’s not be fooled. A better war on terror would mean more civilian deaths in more countries. Guantanamo would have to add on a few extra wings. More civil rights would be tossed out the window. And the self-proclaimed “Nation of Immigrants” would persecute ever-increasing numbers of noncitizens. The rhetoric about terrorism is used to manipulate the populace into allowing the government to commit these inhumane actions. If we accept the legitimacy of the war on terror, we are giving Washington *carte blanche*. Because the truth about the war on terror is that it could be as endless as the Cold War, as stifling as McCarthyism, and as dangerous to freedom as the Japanese internment camps. But the war on terror does not have to become those nightmares. If forces on the left would unequivocally denounce this fig leaf for injustice, we could stop this. Gains have already been made. The Ninth Circuit Court ruled that detention without due process at Guantanamo was unconstitutional. And the Supreme Court rebuked the Bush Administration’s attempts to establish enclaves of lawlessness at Guantanamo Bay in the summer of 2004. In the case of Yaser Hamdi - an American citizen recently removed from Gitmo and returned to Saudi Arabia after years of imprisonment without charges or counsel - the Court was clear on the excesses of the Administration: “He unquestionably has the right to access to counsel in connection with the proceedings.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the Court was unmoved by government’s arguments that standards of proof and justice were somehow irrelevant in the instant case: “Any process in which the Executive’s factual assertions go wholly unchallenged or are simply presumed correct without any opportunity for the alleged combatant to demonstrate otherwise falls constitutionally short.” In light of the deplorable way the Bush Administration handled Hamdi’s case, it is a sign of hope that hundreds of cities nation-wide passed resolutions condemning the USA PATRIOT Act shortly after it was passed. So now it is time for the left to take up where these protests left off actively OPPOSE THE WAR ON TERROR!

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<sup>15</sup> Grassley to Everson, 1/14/04.

<sup>16</sup> Fazollah, Mark. “Reports of Terror Crimes Inflated.” *Philadelphia Inquirer*. May 15, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.srlp.org/index.php?sec=03M&page=wotnotes>

<sup>18</sup> Hamdi et al. v. Rumsfeld et al. Opinion of the Court by Justice O’Connor. June 28, 2004.

## **National Unity and its Discontents**

### **By Max Shmookler – Tufts University**

Multiculturalism in Israel, as seen through a brief history of Mizrahi political activism, challenges the national staging of the Israel/Palestine conflict, and raises questions about the relationship between Jews and Zionism, and furthermore, between Zionism and its others.

In May of 1994, Israeli Knesset member Limor Livnat led a demonstration against an alternative high school in Tel Aviv. This eastward school, or Kedma, was one of three pioneered by Mizrahi Jews - Jews from Arab and Muslim countries - in the ongoing struggle for equal education rights within Israeli society. This struggle, older than the state of Israel, has been complemented in the two decades by a second, more controversial political project. The Mizrahi intellectuals, community leaders and parents who organized the schools sought to promote threads of Jewish history that have been systematically excluded from the curriculum of mainstream state schools, informed as they are by Zionist ideology. In the words of one of the schools founders, the Kedma project broke with the integrationist attitude of earlier Mizrahi political movements, attempting to create an education system that reflected the diverse ethnic and national origins of contemporary Israeli society.<sup>1</sup> This demand -- that the mainstream Zionist discourse produced in large part by European Jews with European Jewry in mind acknowledge that a majority of Israeli Jews hail from places outside of Europe -- is perceived as a substantial threat to the mainstream Zionist discourse. In briefly reviewing the history of the intra-Jewish struggle for social justice in Israel, I hope to raise serious questions about how we, as activists living in the United States, should think about the nationalized framing of the Israel/Palestine conflict.

The Kedma schools were certainly not the first encounter between Mizrahi Jews and the prejudice of predominately Ashkenazi (Anglo-European) Zionism. Since the earliest years of the Zionist project, Yemeni and other Arab Jews were recruited to do the menial labor of settlement building in Eretz Yisrael (Hebrew for the Land of Israel). For the early waves of Ashkenazi settlers, relying on Mizrahi labor served two purposes. It created a Jewish social underclass to do the menial work of state building, thereby fulfilling the Zionist principle of exclusively Jewish labor to build the infrastructure of a state, while simultaneously excusing European Jews from work they saw as undignified and beneath them.

Yet this practice of relying on Mizrahi labor, which by 1948 meant that 20-25% of the Jewish population in Palestine was from Asia and Africa, raised serious concerns for some Ashkenazi Zionists. Most of these concerns were actually racialized fears that Mizrahi Jews would corrupt a strictly European imagination of the future Jewish state. From the first Zionist thinkers on, Ashkenazi Zionists saw Arab Jews from within the rubric of European supremacy, their difference understood as a lack of culture, education, and ultimately, a place in the modern world. Even such figures as Ahad Haam, the respected Zionist humanist, mused publicly, "Yemenite immigration affects the nature of the Zionist settlement by dint of their different culture and mentality."<sup>2</sup>

This racialized division within the Jewish community testifies to the ambiguity of the Zionist project, which struggled to end anti-Jewish oppression through European-style colonialism in Palestine. Yet the widespread sense of European supremacy was not only leveled against Palestinians, but also against those Jews who did not fit the bill. The painful irony is that the Ashkenazi Jews exhibited the same exclusive European supremacy to their Mizrahi coreligionists that Christian Europe exhibited to its European Jews. Zionism, in trying to protect Jews from Christian hostility, reproduced that hostility within its discourse.

After the creation of Israel in 1948, these biases within Jewish society became more pronounced. The poor conditions in the Zionist holding camps across North Africa and the Middle

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<sup>1</sup> Chetrit, Sami Shalom. Mizrahi Politics in Israel: Between Integration and Alternative. *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXIX, no 4 (Summer 2000) pp 51-65

<sup>2</sup> Massad, Joseph. "Zionism's Internal Others: Israel and the Oriental Jews" *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXV, no 4 (Summer 1996). at 54.

East - where many Jews awaited transport to Israel - were accentuated by the welcome they received upon arrival in Israel. An extreme, yet common illustration of this reception is that many Mizrahim were deloused and disinfected with DDT upon entry into Israel.<sup>3</sup> This cruel treatment quickly gave way to more pandemic forms of discrimination. For while Mizrahi Jews were held in cramped transient camps, many Ashkenazi families were quickly settled in recently vacated Palestinian neighborhoods. The transient camps were plagued with food shortages, lack of medical supplies, and inadequate housing and employment opportunities. Already in 1949 there were mass demonstrations within the camps, protesting the rampant neglect and consistent discrimination. These demonstrations were often quite fierce, as in Haifa when demonstrators stormed the Jewish Agency building and weeks later attacked the former parliament building in Tel Aviv.<sup>4</sup>

Many Mizrahi immigrants were subsequently moved to Development Towns, located on Israel's newly constituted borders. These towns were designed specifically to modernize Mizrahi Jews, who were seen as culturally inferior and notably pre-modern. As Ben Gurion asserted, "We do not want Israelis to become Arabs. We are in duty bound to fight against the spirit of the Levant, which corrupts individuals and societies, and preserve the authentic Jewish values as they crystallized in the [European] Diaspora."<sup>5</sup> Behind the often-racist rhetoric of Ashkenazi leaders, development and modernization of non-European Jews actually meant subjugation to Ashkenazi capital. Many of the Development Towns were organized around a single, Ashkenazi, or state owned factory that employed Mizrahi labor for lower wages (in comparison to other parts of the state). These Towns, contrary to their stated purposes, have had chronically poor education systems, high levels of unemployment, inadequate housing, and, to boot, have been the targets of Arab military attacks due to their isolated and vulnerable location near the borders.

In the eyes of Sami Shalom Chetrit, a Mizrahi intellectual and activist, the five and half decades since the founding of the state of Israel have witnessed a shift in Mizrahi tactics without fundamental redress in issues of social and political equality. The early political expressions of Mizrahi discontent - from the demonstrations in 1949 to the Wadi Salib uprising in 1959 to the formation of the Mizrahi Black Panthers in the early 1970s - often sought acceptance and integration within the Ashkenazi dominated state. Rather than articulate an alternate vision of the Zionist project, underscored by an Ashkenazi narrative, the early Mizrahi activists sought to find their place within that narrative. But in many cases, the integrationist approach led to the co-option of leaders and the achievement of short term goals, without challenging the exclusive and supremacist basis of the Zionist movement. Since the early 1980s, Mizrahi activists focused on mainstream recognition of their distinct cultural, economic, and political demands. New religious and secular movements have formed to raise the standard of a different type of political activism: one that aims to displace the Ashkenazi center of the national Zionist mythology. That is, an attempt among some Mizrahi activists to challenge Zionism at its core.

In this context, where there is no consensus within the Israeli Jewish community about the status of the Zionist project, we need to rethink the lines of the Israel-Palestine conflict. For resisting the hegemonic elements of the Zionist project means supporting Mizrahi activists and their allies, who have been consistently marginalized by (and are active in resisting) the same Ashkenazi-controlled state that has maintained the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. If we accept the reductive terms of the Israel-Palestine conflict, we implicitly accept the Ashkenazi ruling elites conflation of Ashkenazi Zionism and Israel. In other words, we accept the same Ashkenazi call for national unity that has been used to marginalize Mizrahi led social justice initiatives such as the Kedma schools as supposedly unpatriotic, anti-Zionist, and deeply threatening to the security and unity (that is, Ashkenazi dominance) of the Israeli state.

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<sup>3</sup> Giladi, G.N. *Discord In Zion: Conflict between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews in Israel*. Scorpion Publishing, 1990. at 103.

<sup>4</sup> Massad at 58.

<sup>5</sup> qtd. in Massad at 57.

In so doing, we further obscure an interesting and complex history of relations between Mizrahi Jews and Palestinian activists. Many of the issues facing Mizrahi communities - including the lack of political representation, the threat of cultural erasure, endemic poverty, housing problems (including a long history of home demolitions), inadequate health and education services, and widespread police brutality - are strikingly similar, in nature if not in degree, to those plaguing Palestinians living under occupation. This recognition has led to many initiatives, especially during the first Intifada, when Mizrahi Jews were in the forefront of left-wing Israeli-Palestinian solidarity campaigns. One notable project was an historic succession of Israeli-Palestinian and specifically Mizrahi-Palestinian dialogue meetings, culminating in July 1989, when 38 Mizrahi intellectuals and activists and a large Palestinian delegation, including Mahmoud Abbas and Mahmoud Darwish, met in Toledo, Spain.<sup>6</sup>

Especially now, with Mahmoud Abbas elected chairman of the PA, keeping the complexity of the conflict in mind is essential for remaining critical of whatever upcoming peace negotiations emerge.

### **Excerpt of Talk by Mike Hoffman, Founder, Iraq Veterans Against the War, [www.ivaw.net](http://www.ivaw.net), at the National Conference of the Campus Anti-War Network, November 13, 2004.**

...What I think we need to do to win the “war on terror,” is not occupy and destroy every country we feel is harboring terrorists or doing terrorists things. What we need to do is what we did with the Marshall Plan, except expand it to the rest of the world, help those countries rebuild, not for our profit but for their profit and their general well-being. If the rest of the world is living at standards we have when we’re not busy trying to oppress them and steal their natural resources, there would be no terrorism. [Applause]

That’s what we need to understand and that’s what we need to let this rest of the country know. We need to clue them in on the true history of what’s actually been going on in the world. And when they start understanding that they’ll see the rest of this in context and see what we have to do.

Talking again about the war in Iraq. What’s going on right now is not what the news is telling people. The reality on the ground is so much different from what’s being told on the news; it makes me sick watching the news some days. After being there, being on the ground, seeing the reality, talking every single day to other people been there or come back or just guys who are still there right now, it’s unbelievable the difference. And the first thing I think everyone understands but we need to keep saying it:

Who we are fighting in Iraq is not terrorists. They’re not, you know, all these Islamic militants coming in from Syria, Jordan, Libya...Egypt, all these countries...there are some of them there. They’re the ones responsible for the suicide attacks mostly, but the average day-to-day fighting, those who are really taking a toll on our fighters over there, are the average Iraqi citizens. They are occupied, and they want their freedom back and I believe they have every single right to have it [Applause]... A five-hundred pound bomb, as accurate as it may be, is still a five-hundred pound bomb. It is going to level every single thing in the nearby vicinity, including innocent women and children. Including people who want nothing to do with this war except to live their lives, take care of their families and carry on – the exact same thing people here in the US want.

... There’s this sense of urgency now, and that is what we have to carry through. We have to let people know that bombs are dropping and people are dropping. The next one to die might be their neighbor, might be their friend from high school. That is what we need to let them know and that is what’s going to get people reenergized to get them back out on the streets.

[The entire talk is available online: [http://traprockpeace.org/campus\\_antiwar\\_04.html](http://traprockpeace.org/campus_antiwar_04.html) ]

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<sup>6</sup> Gilaldi at 312-316.

## **The Antiwar Movement and the Iraqi Resistance**

### **Sid Patel – Berkeley Stop the War Coalition**

A wide variety of positions on the Iraqi resistance exist within the anti-occupation movement, ranging from condemnation to support. This debate has important consequences, particularly because the right wing of this country is attacking our movement by arguing that an immediate withdrawal right now would lead to chaos and the ascendance of dangerous Islamic terrorists. During the recent attack on Fallujah, the US military even claimed that they were “liberating” Fallujah from the tyrannical, cruel reign of the resistance. If anti-occupation activists do not counter the right-wing’s claim that the occupation is necessary to quell the resistance, we will have a very hard time winning broader layers of people to join our movement. Antiwar activists should support the Iraqi resistance, and we should point to the very existence of the resistance to demolish the claim that the occupation is about liberation and democracy.

“It was a mistake to discount the Iraqi resistance,” Lt. Col. Kim Keslung told the *Wall Street Journal* in October 2003. “If someone invaded Texas, we'd do the same thing.”<sup>1</sup>

The most widespread slander against the Iraqi resistance is that they are all a bunch of foreign terrorists, criminals, and former Baathists. The warmongers in Washington and the corporate media constantly play-up and repeat this distortion to ensure that the American public develops no sympathies with those ordinary Iraqis fighting for independence. Unfortunately, sections of the anti-occupation movement have accepted this smear and concluded that we actually should not support the resistance, just like we should not support Osama bin Laden. The fact of the matter, though, is that the vast majority of the Iraqi resistance is composed of ordinary Iraqis who have decided to take up arms to rid their country of a colonial occupation. Even American officials and generals admit this much:

Bush administration officials have drawn a consistent picture of the insurgents they have been fighting in the past 17 months of occupation: religious extremists, “dead-enders” associated with Saddam Hussein and foreign terrorists slipping across the country's porous borders.

But a wide range of interviews with Iraqis and U.S. officials here paints a starkly different portrait -- a growing, intensely nationalist resistance determined to remove U.S. forces and their Iraqi allies.<sup>2</sup>

The concrete reality of life under occupation fuels the resistance. Remember that unemployment in parts of Iraq is up to 70%, according to independent reporter Dahr Jamail’s article “Iraq’s Economy”<sup>3</sup>. Electricity, water, and sewage have not been fully restored, even in Baghdad, and hospitals all throughout Iraq are facing severe shortages in supplies and medicines. Most damning of all, a study by researchers at Johns Hopkins, Columbia, and Al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad concluded that at least 100,000 Iraqi civilians have died as a direct result of the US occupation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Trofimov, Yaroslav, "In a Tent Hospital, A Close-Up View Of Attacks in Iraq Doctors Face Rising Toll Of Badly Injured Troops," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 29, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Daragahi, Borzou, “Nationalism Drives Many Insurgents as They Fight U.S. 'Terrorists,' Only One Element, Experts Say.” *SF Chronicle*, A-9, October 26, 2004

<sup>3</sup> Jamail, Dahr. “Iraq’s Economy.” *Zmag* < <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=15&ItemID=6619> >. Nov 11, 2004

<sup>4</sup> Roberts, Les, et al. “Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey.” *The Lancet*, Volume 364 Issue 9448 Page 1857. October 24, 2004.

This must be the starting point for discussion: a small section of the Iraqi resistance is composed of hard-core militants and the al-Zarqawi network, but the overwhelming majority is ordinary Iraqis fed up with the daily destruction, poverty, and humiliation of the occupation. If the resistance can slow down some of the daily death and destruction by forcing the US military to stay in its bases on the outskirts of cities, then by all means I hope they succeed.

Faced with an overwhelming disadvantage in terms of military power, the resistance has turned to tactics that have appeared in all armed struggles for national liberation. These include guerrilla warfare (e.g. hit and run ambushes, roadside bombs) and attacks on Iraqis who collaborate with the US military, like the police, the new national guard, and members of Allawi's government. Also, a small section of the resistance has taken and executed hostages as a means of pressuring foreign governments. In our discussions about the tactics of the resistance, we must recognize that imperial powers label *all* acts of resistance "terrorism" in an effort to completely delegitimize the genuine struggles and grievances of colonized peoples. We should share nothing in common with that approach.

At the same time, we can both unconditionally support the resistance and have an honest opinion about some of the tactics they employ. While we should not pontificate from afar about what strategies oppressed peoples can and cannot pursue in an incredibly difficult struggle for their liberation, we can assess what tactics seem best in terms of inflicting damage on the US military and strengthening the anti-occupation movements in the oppressor countries. And we should never forget that the main source of the most hideous, abhorrent violence in Iraq right now is the US military.

The second most common objection to supporting the resistance is that it is dominated by political Islam. Thus, if the resistance actually were to drive the US military out, Iraq would turn into an Islamic state that would violate the rights of women, gays and lesbians, religious and ethnic minorities. But this argument has several serious problems, not the least of which is that the resistance is made up of several dozen if not hundreds of groups with varying ideologies and platforms, from secular nationalists to trade unionists to political Islamists.

That aside, this argument is purely hypocritical coming from the right-wingers in this country – since when did they care about women's rights, civil rights, and gay rights? The Democrats and the Republicans have joined hands to push through dramatic rollbacks in abortion rights, the evisceration of affirmative action, the expansion of the racist criminal justice system, and the denial of equal marriage rights for gays and lesbians. And *they* want to protect these groups in Iraq? In reality, the main underpinning for the right's newfound "concern" for women, minorities, and LGBT people in Iraq is Islamophobia, which has been reinforced by the War on Terror. If the United States were illegally invaded and brutally occupied by a foreign state, and a significant part of the American resistance, especially in the Southeast, was led by conservative Christians and evangelicals, would it then be right to abandon the Americans and tell them that the occupation was good for them?

On the other hand, many genuine women's rights activists have raised a similar concern, saying that an Islamic state would be worse for women and other oppressed groups than what exists in Iraq right now. I think we have to take on this question in two ways. First, the *Lancet* study concerning civilian deaths in Iraq concluded that most of the deaths reported were of women and children. It is patently untrue that the US military is somehow protecting women – in fact, it's killing thousands of them. Secondly, genuine self-determination means that Iraqis would act independently, electing leaders and enacting policies as they see fit. Anti-occupation activists in the US *cannot* take the position that we are for Iraqi independence only if they behave according to our criteria. That's just another form of the "White Man's Burden", the racist justification for colonialism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that has been resurrected by a new generation of liberal imperialists: we civilized folk know what's good for the barbarians, and we'll advance their culture (after slaughtering many hundreds of thousands of them and while exploiting their resources and labor). Anti-occupation activists must be unconditionally for the right of Iraqis to determine their own future – no strings attached.



That said, I would strongly support the emergence and growth of a secular, radical, progressive current that fought for better positions on women's rights, gay rights, and minority rights within the politics of the resistance. Furthermore, after the US is forced out, there will surely be a political struggle within Iraq, and I hope to see that same current grow and win in an independent Iraq. As long as US troops remain in Iraq, though, it will be nearly impossible for a mass women's liberation movement to fight for equality. Arundhati Roy, a leading radical anti-imperialist, said,

The Iraqi resistance is fighting on the frontlines of the battle against Empire. And therefore that battle is our battle.

Like most resistance movements, it combines a motley range of assorted factions. Former Baathists, liberals, Islamists, fed-up collaborationists, communists, etc. Of course, it is riddled with opportunism, local rivalry, demagoguery, and criminality. But if we are only going to support pristine movements, then no resistance will be worthy of our purity.

This is not to say that we shouldn't ever criticize resistance movements. Many of them suffer from a lack of democracy, from the iconization of their "leaders," a lack of transparency, a lack of vision and direction. But most of all they suffer from vilification, repression, and lack of resources.

Before we prescribe how a pristine Iraqi resistance must conduct their secular, feminist, democratic, nonviolent battle, we should shore up our end of the resistance by forcing the U.S. and its allies' governments to withdraw from Iraq.<sup>5</sup>

Some activists, particularly those who are rightly trying to bring veterans and military families to the forefront of the movement, believe that there is an inconsistency in both supporting the resistance and being saddened by the deaths of over 1200 American soldiers. This contradiction, however, is a consequence of the dynamic of imperialism – namely, that working people from different countries are pitted against each other in wars that are truly competitions between their ruling classes. The best way to prevent more soldiers' deaths is to bring the troops home immediately.

Unfortunately, though, this occupation is strategically critical to the interests of the American ruling class, and they aren't going to withdraw without an intense fight. Crucial to ending the occupation will be soldiers refusing to take part in the carnage, like the recent incident with the 343<sup>rd</sup> Quartermaster Company. Part of that fight will be a raging anti-occupation movement in this country. And part of that fight – the central part of that fight – will be an organized Iraqi resistance able to exact a price from Washington for its barbaric occupation.

The Iraqi resistance is at the center of the battle against the US Empire as a material challenge to the American ruling class – all of Rumsfeld's and Wolfowitz's dreams of moving quickly on to Iran and Syria were crushed by the emergence of Iraqis who fought back. The resistance has eroded public support for the occupation and forced the US government to deal with the lies about liberation. If Iraqis are liberated and happy, then how do you explain the resistance? How do you explain the intense public outrage in Iraq over the attack on the resistance in Fallujah? The anti-occupation movement is fighting in America to deal a blow to the US government and its imperial designs. The Iraqi resistance is fighting to do the same and to win self-determination. Their fight is our fight.

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<sup>5</sup> Roy, Arundhati. "Public Power in the Age of Empire." San Francisco, California on August 16th, 2004. Copyright 2004, Arundhati Roy. Available online at < [http://www.democracynow.org/static/Arundhati\\_Trans.shtml](http://www.democracynow.org/static/Arundhati_Trans.shtml) >

## **Campus Updates**

### **Georgia State University**

#### **"Bring Them Home Now"**

On Tuesday, November 16, some 30 people gathered at Georgia State University in Atlanta to attend a forum hosted, by Students for Peace and Justice, featuring two members of military families who are outspoken critics of the war in Iraq. Denise Thomas, whose daughter served in the Army in Iraq, and Howard Wolf, whose son is currently serving as a member of the Air National Guard, discussed their outrage over this illegal war and occupation.

Denise's story was deeply touching and infuriating. Her daughter, Shanell, enlisted in the Army after Denise lost her job and it became apparent that there would be no money for college. Despite having severe scoliosis, Shanell was sent to Baghdad, where she was stationed for over a year, living in one of the regime's bombed-out palaces. Denise described the daily torment of wondering whether her daughter had been killed far from home in a war which Denise increasingly came to see as unjust and unnecessary. Shanell wrote her mother letters describing the horrors in Baghdad; the scene there was far different from the one portrayed by American media. Shanell spoke of bodies rotting in the streets and mass rapes of Iraqi women. The moderate Denise soon found herself a "moderate who had swerved to the left."

Luckily enough, Shanell made it home alive, thanks to Denise's hard efforts to get her out due to her preexisting medical condition. Afterward Denise found herself gaining some profile as a critic of the war. She wrote a response to the widely-circulated pro-war letter "A Soldier's Father Speaks Out" and started a website to tell her story and reach out to others in her position. She now receives letters and emails from soldiers and soldiers' families all over the country, sharing her outrage.

"Many people I talk to think we should throw our soldiers to the wolves," Denise said. "This is an unnecessary war. I also think the Afghan war could have been avoided. We should bring them home now."

Howard Wolf's son joined the Air National Guard out of "a love of flying," much as Howard had as a young man. He now finds himself flying F-16s from an Air Force Base in Qatar. "He's one of the people bombing Fallujah right now," Howard noted, with an air of disappointment. Howard, a Vietnam veteran and member of Military Families Speak Out, spoke solemnly of the horrors of war and how undemocratically the war in Iraq was approved. "Iraq looks to me like an instant replay of Vietnam," Howard noted. "Johnson and McNamara lied to us to take us to war, just like Bush." Howard brought up other historical lessons, pointing to the failure of the British occupation of Iraq in the early 20th century, which was dogged for years by a strong resistance movement. "We need to get out of Iraq now, because we can do no better. We're making the same mistake as the British."

Denise and Howard's comments spawned a rich discussion, which covered the election, the state of the anti-war movement, the underlying reasons for the war, and the future of the Bush doctrine. There was a general sense of relief that the elections were over and excitement at the prospect of rebuilding a vibrant anti-war movement. As one activist noted, "The movement's not dead, it's only sleeping. It's up to us to wake it up." The importance of military families, veterans, and active-duty soldiers in an anti-war movement was underlined, as was the need for a call to bring all the troops home now. As Denise said, "Iraq is a mess because we're there."

The forum was a great first step toward rebuilding a real grassroots movement against the occupation of Iraq.

- Desmond - originalman777@aol.com

### **New York University**

This semester has been a trying one for the NYU Chapter. Though we gained a few people in the beginning, we seem to have since remained stagnant. It appears that this has come to pass as a

result of the overall inward focus of the group. Our weekly meetings have been plagued with scheduling issues, and as a result, have not been as consistently well-attended as we would have liked.

That is not to say, however, that a great deal of effort towards the group has not been made. Our core remains firm and steadfast in our effort to become a presence on campus. We have attempted to table at least once per week, to which the reception of students has been expectedly mixed. We have experienced a great deal of uncertainty in the voices of those we meet. They are consistently unsure if what we are doing actually accomplishes anything, and they often reveal after a few minutes of conversation that they believe that the occupation is "warranted" or "legitimate". (This usually stems from the belief in the "chaos theory", which advocates that a withdrawal from Iraq would create a chaotic and ultimately catastrophic state.) Also, there is a widespread feeling among many of those on the left at NYU that because Bush was re-elected, our efforts in stopping him are futile. These are issues that we have tried to address through conversation.

Among the hardships, we have had a few beams of hope. We have had several brilliantly thought-provoking discussions in our weekly meetings. (debating the possibility of withdrawal, discussing and researching Palestine, etc.) The CAN conference seems to have refueled us politically, and since then we have had a couple particularly successful tablings (actually getting up on tables in the cafeteria and condemning the war in Iraq) and a viewing of "Rebels With a Cause", a documentary that detailed the anti-war movement of the 60's (specifically SDS).

We are currently working toward getting people to the protest in Washington DC on January 20th, and we are looking forward to next semester to overcome our failures and repeat our successes.  
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### **UC Santa Cruz**

Virtually, no anti-war activities took place on the UC Santa Cruz campus this quarter. There have been a handful of seminars that have been held by a few academics regarding the U.S. occupation, however most of these were almost apolitical in that they argued that the "decline of the U.S. empire is inevitable" and gave little reason to organize. Almost all of the elements that made up the previous anti-war group devoted their time to the elections (mostly campaigning for John Kerry). The drive to get Bush out of the office halted most progressive activities on campus, especially the anti-war movement.

However, with the re-election of the Bush administration, massacre in Fallujah, and four deaths of local men who were fighting in the war there has been an upsurge of political activity on campus. The remnants of the UCSC CAN chapter, along with various left groups, are working together to organize a united action on January 20th. We hope to create a fully formed anti-war coalition on campus, and will hold our first general meeting after the action on January 20th. Anger is brewing against the war in Iraq and we are making a valiant effort to turn that anger into action.

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### **UC-Berkeley**

The Berkeley Stop the War Coalition has experienced real growth this semester, from a core of about three people to about twelve people who consistently come to meetings and have all been active in organizing our events. About 30 people attended our first meeting in September, and we immediately started brainstorming. The next week the thousandth soldier was killed in Iraq, and we basically blocked traffic through Dwinelle plaza with huge banners reading, "37,000 Iraqi civilians killed," "1,000 + U.S. soldiers killed," and "Bring the Troops Home Now." We passed out flyers for a movie screening of "the Fourth World War," which about eighty people attended. The discussion quickly turned into a debate about the election, but the general consensus was that we needed to start actually doing something to get people involved and protesting. We started organizing a forum around the draft, which was turned into a forum on what the war means to us at home when the draft legislation was defeated in Congress just a few weeks before the event. On October 20th, Jobert

Poblete from Action in Defense of Education, Daniel Saver from BSTW, Michael Eisencher from U.S. Labor Against the War, a draft resister named Steve Kessler, Lee from Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and Diana from Iraq Veterans Against the War spoke about the utter havoc this war has wreaked on the lives of students, people of color, working people, the soldiers, and the Iraqi people. Diana's speech was especially powerful. She wasn't speaking as someone with an agenda to push, or an argument to sell, but as someone who has seen what is happening and thinks it is wrong. "Nothing we're doing over there is liberation," she said. "The only liberated Iraqis are dead Iraqis." Though speakers of this caliber should have been presenting to hundreds of people, the turnout was roughly a hundred people, reflecting the de-mobilizing impact the elections have had on the anti-war movement as a whole. Nevertheless, we took about 15 people to the Not In Our Name post-election rally in San Francisco the next week, and organized a speak-out against the attacks on Fallujah on Dwinelle Plaza where about 30 people signed up on our listserv. We've begun planning a visual memorial of over a thousand cardboard tombstones for the Iraqis and soldiers killed and a forum with Diana to kick off the semester. We've also added a demilitarization working-group, and right now we're working on reaching out to other activist groups on campus to build a strong counter-recruitment coalition on campus for next semester. The response so far has been very positive: we've already gotten replies from the Boalt Law LBGT Caucus and the Rise Up for Peace organization. This break, some of our members are going to be working on fact sheets and an article about the case for getting military recruiters off of campuses to share with CAN. Most people in BSTW think that we need to be very action-oriented next semester, so our focus is going to be on strong, consistent tabling and giving everyone who comes opportunities for concrete activism.

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