

OUR TROOPS AND IRAQIS ARE STILL DYING

An Open Letter to the Peace/Anti-War Movement from

Iraq Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out, and Veterans For Peace

After six years of war and the historic election of a new President, we as veterans, military and Gold Star families felt an urgent need to reach out to the larger peace/anti-war movements to make our position on Iraq clear during this time of political and economic uncertainty. Iraq Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out and Veterans For Peace continue to stand together in our demand to Bring the Troops Home Now! We ask all those who have stood with us in the past to stay faithful to the cause.

President Obama has announced a plan to gradually reduce troop levels in Iraq. Many in the peace/anti-war movements are breathing a sigh of relief, and suggesting that it is time for us to scale back our efforts to bring an end to the occupation of Iraq. But for our troops on the ground, their families and the Iraqi people, the nightmare continues. They need all of us to stay in the struggle. IVAW, MFSO and VFP have been long united in our call for an immediate and complete end to the occupation of Iraq and will not shift our stance under any circumstances.

President Obama's plan will result in more casualties and suffering for U.S. troops, their families and Iraqis. To the American public facing hard times here at home, two and a half more years of occupation may not sound like that long -- but for our troops and their families it means two and a half more years of fear, pain, and separation in a war and occupation based on lies. Hundreds of the troops deployed in the next two and a half years will not come home alive. Many more will return forever scarred by deep wounds to their bodies, minds, and spirits. Well over a million Iraqis have died as a result of this war -- many more will be killed as the occupation continues.

We cannot afford the cost of empire. Today we are in the midst of the worst economic crisis most of us have seen in our lifetimes. Yet our government continues to allow the occupation to drain \$10 billion a month from our nation's coffers. Meanwhile, veterans and military families struggle to put food on the table and get decent housing and adequate medical care. Women and men who risked their lives for this country are often forced to fight tooth and nail to get health care from an underfunded and overburdened Veterans Administration. Hundreds of thousands of veterans are homeless.

The occupation of Iraq is the source of the violence not the solution. Living under occupation the people of Iraq are held back from taking control of their own lives to determine their destiny. The continued U.S. military presence there is a cause of the violence they face, not its solution. U.S. continued interference contradicts the principles of democracy and self-determination our country was founded on.

IVAW, MFSO and VFP will continue to keep pressure on Congress and the President to bring all our troops home from Iraq NOW, ensure that veterans receive the care they need and deserve, and that the U.S. provides resources to rebuild a country we destroyed. But we cannot do that alone. **We need your help to reach out to the vast majority of the American people who are completely isolated from the realities of this war.** Please don't abandon this struggle or shift your position before the occupation is over and our veterans and the Iraqi people are on the path to healing.

City April 1-7, 2009

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) was founded by Iraq war veterans in July 2004 at the annual convention of Veterans for Peace (VFP) in Boston to give a voice to the large number of active duty service people and veterans who are against this war, but are under various pressures to remain silent. From its inception, IVAW has called for: Immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces in Iraq; reparations for the human and structural damages Iraq has suffered, and stopping the corporate pillaging of Iraq so that their people can control their own lives and future; and dull benefits, adequate healthcare (including mental health), and other supports for returning servicemen and women. IVAW's membership includes recent veterans and active duty servicemen and women from all branches of military service, National Guard members, and reservists who have served in the United States military since September 11, 2001.

Military Families Speak Out is an organization of people opposed to the war in Iraq who have relatives or loved ones who are currently in the military or who have served in the military since the buildup to the Iraq war in the fall of 2002. Formed by two families in November of 2002, MFSO now has over 4,000 member families. MFSO's national chapter, Gold Star Families Speak Out includes families whose loved ones have died as a result of the war in Iraq.

Founded in 1985, Veterans for Peace is a national organization of men and women veterans of all eras and duty stations spanning the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, Gulf and current Iraq wars as well as other conflicts cold or hot. It has chapters in nearly every state in the union and is headquartered in St. Louis, MO. Our collective experience tells us wars are easy to start and hard to stop and that those hurt are often the innocent. Thus, other means of problem solving are necessary. Veterans For Peace is an official Non- Governmental Organization (NGO) represented at the U.N.