

Iraq Working Session
WCC UN Advocacy Week, 18 November 2004, 11:00 a.m.

“The Church Stance On Iraq: What Now?”

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I. Agenda for the Session: Salient Points for Developing a Current Stance

[This section is a guide for the Iraq Working Session at the World Council of Churches International Affairs and Advocacy Week in New York, 11/04.]

BACKGROUND

Among the factors that inform the working session are the following:

- Many church statements before and during the Iraq war in 2003 -- concerning pre-emptive war, international law, humanitarian law, Christian Muslim relations. (See Section III, below.)
- Far fewer but significant church statements, plus limited actions, since the war.
- Many salient issues for churches internationally since the war, including:
 1. Impact of insecurity, violence, occupation on the Iraqi population.
 2. Continuing violations of international humanitarian law and international law
 3. Hostage-taking and executions; lawlessness.
 4. Limitations of church actions because of contradictory roles chosen by expatriate church-related groups; much role confusion around Christians in Iraq and beyond—especially between missionaries, military aid work and church-related aid workers.
 5. Proportionality of response—resources and political capital spent on Iraq and to fight terrorism, compared to other crises.
- Of special concern in Iraq: Violence directed against Iraqi Christians and churches.
- As Iraq's elections loom it is worth noting that this Iraq crisis is the latest in a series of crises that began in the colonial era, and especially after 1915, in which Western powers have asserted themselves in the Middle East and sought to establish governments favourable to their interests.
- According to polls, national and international public opinion has deep reservations about the course of the events in Iraq. This presumably includes church membership in the countries polled. The course of the recent election in the US has done little to improve international opinion. However, broadly shared opposition world-wide may offer potential for corrective action.

SESSION PREPARATION

To prepare for the session, please read this document.

SESSION CONTENT

1. Presentations – Summary of the situation and the issues in Iraq with the limitations and potential for church action there. Two perspectives (2 x 10 min.) :
 - A. Outlook and challenges from within Iraq and the region by Nuhad Tomeh, associate general secretary, Middle East Council of Churches, Beirut.
 - B. Outlook and imperatives for churches beyond the region by James Paul, Global Policy Forum, New York.
2. Plenary reaction and discussion – Key questions to address (15 min.):
 - Lessons learned from the pre- and post-war church statements and actions?
 - What needs to be said now? Who is the key audience?
 - Are there critical, feasible actions to recommend for the period ahead?
3. Small group work (20 min.) – Participants work in small groups to agree on key point(s) from their church and national contexts. Small groups are responsible to provide the resulting input in writing. The material offered will be used to develop WCC statement/actions on Iraq in early 2005.
4. Conclusion (5 min.)

II. Summary of Church Issues, Actions Since the War

Sections II & III reflect major categories in church statements. Researched by Julia Novitskaia, Project Ploughshares intern with WCC CCIA.

1) Humanitarian situation: Vulnerable Children

The National Council of Churches in USA has called attention to hunger that continues for Iraqis, especially for children.¹ After a week-long assessment visit to Baghdad from April 23 to May 5, 2003, Church World Service reported that while major combat operations in Iraq have ended, the war against disease and hunger continues for the Iraqi people, especially Iraq's children.² The incidence of chronic diseases being reported among children in Baghdad remains high, including diarrhoea and vomiting, believed caused by dysentery and amoebic dysentery, typhoid, epilepsy, iron deficiency, anaemia, skin diseases including scabies, chicken pox, measles, and burns by

¹The National Council of Churches, USA, Report from 5 September, 2003; <http://www.nccusa.org/iraq/iraqlinks.html>
For more stories about the situation of the children

www.lwr.org/allourchildren/photos/index.html, www.allourchildren.org and www.act-intl.org

² NGO partners in the All Our Children Campaign include Church World Service's, Mennonite Central Committee, Lutheran World Relief, Jubilee Partners, the National Council of Churches USA, Oxfam America, Sojourners, and Stop Hunger Now.

benzene or gas. As well as an overcrowding in hospitals and clinics, a general lack of sources of protein was also reported.

In March, 2004, Church World Service reported continuing its work with Iraqi youth in targeted projects that further the health and well being of the population.³ Church World Service works with *Enfants du Monde* and the Iraqi Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA), on a project for children, for access to education, hygiene and protection. Church World Service also affirmed a proposal from the Iraqi Help and Development Organization to provide health assessments and support for schoolchildren. This is the first *All Our Children* Campaign project with an Iraqi NGO and in that sense will also help build capacity for this Iraqi sector. *All Our Children* is a coalition campaign co-founded by Church World Service and other faith-based humanitarian agencies dedicated to meeting the critical health needs of the most vulnerable Iraqi children.

2) Continuing Instability and Insecurity in Iraq: Aid Limitations and Pull-Outs

Christian Aid (UK) warned in August 2004 that the security situation in Iraq continues to hamper the reconstruction effort and prevents many international development agencies from operating in Iraq.⁴ Earlier in May 2004, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) moved its international staff to neighbouring countries due to the difficult security situation. This has affected the implementation of water and sanitation emergency projects, as well as projects aimed at children.⁵ ACT member DanChurchAid (DCA), working with NCA, also decided to close a rapid-response water repair project, part of the rehabilitation of rural water-supply systems, earlier than planned due to security concerns.

3) Religious and Ethnic Tensions Threaten Governance, Socio-Political Stability

In September 2004 Christian Aid (UK) called attention to the fact that ethnic and religious divisions have amplified and ethnic clashes have increased, particularly in the Kurdish north.⁶ The challenge for the future is to build a democracy that can represent all Iraq's peoples, uphold human rights, prevent further persecution of vulnerable groups and ensure the country's wealth is fairly shared. Christian Aid's partners have now begun long-term programmes in the centre and south of the country. Activities include repair to water and sanitation, a mother and child health programme, sustainable agriculture and human rights education

On September 30, 2004, *Religion News Service* reported, "fearing lawlessness and rising Islamic fundamentalism in their own country, large numbers of Iraqi Christians are fleeing to neighbouring Jordan and Syria. No one knows for certain how many of Iraq's 750,000 Christians have left the country since the removal of Saddam Hussein, but estimates are in the tens of thousands. The level of mistreatment Christians face in Iraq is disputed, even among Christians themselves, but no one can deny the fear, which is palpable among those crossing the border. Church bombings in Baghdad and Mosul only fuel that fear, but so do individual stories, even though few can be substantiated outside of Iraq."⁷

4) Churches: Government is Responsible for Truth-Telling, Accountability

Truth telling is central to Christian theology, which teaches that falsehood has consequences. Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams recently warned that "credible claims on our political loyalty have something to do with

³ Church World Service, "Church World Service Remains Engaged in Iraq, All Our Children Approves New Projects for Country's Youngest; March 16, 2004 , <http://www.churchworldservice.org/news/archives/2004/03/171.html>

⁴ Christian Aid UK, "Christian Aid in Iraq", August 2004, <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/world/where/meece/iraqp.htm>

⁵ Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), "Situation Report Update Insecurity in Iraq hampers relief efforts", September 2004. <http://www.pcusa.org/pda/response/middleeast/iraq-update-090704.htm>

⁶ Christian Aid UK, "Christian Aid in Iraq", September 2004, <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/world/where/meece/iraqp.htm>

⁷ *Religion News Service*, "Thousands of Christians Flee, Fearing Rising Islamic Fundamentalism", September 30, 2004, http://www.beliefnet.com/story/153/story_15343_1.html

a demonstrable attention to truth".⁸ When "liberators" become "occupiers," greeted not with flowers but with an unexpected and bloody insurgency, the moral ground is further diminished.

Christian Aid reported that billions of dollars of oil money transferred to the US-controlled Coalition Provisional Authority have effectively disappeared without knowing how the vast majority of this money has been spent.⁹ And the US-controlled coalition in Baghdad handed over power to an Iraqi government without having properly accounted for what it has done with some \$20 billion of Iraq's own money.

The humanitarian situation in Iraq is still critical and there are plenty of immediate needs on which money from international donors can be spent.

5) Torture – An Affront to Faith As Well As Human Dignity¹⁰

Sojourners Magazine tackled the politics and Christian theology at stake in the Iraq War. Writer Jim Wallis says moral theology is worthy of a serious public discussion, especially when the war's commander-in-chief speaks often of his Christian faith. The pictures from Abu Ghraib prison have already become recruiting posters for the next generation of terrorists in the Muslim world.

In preferring the virtues of human dignity, justice, and humility, Christianity implicitly teaches that empire is not the best strategy to fight terrorism. In fact, the domination policies of empire often make terrorism worse by producing tragic behaviours that terrorists use to fuel their murderous agendas. And when leaders from the American Religious Right describe Islam as an "evil religion," they are, however indirectly, helping to set conditions for the abuse of Muslim detainees. Abuse and torture are always more likely when the victims are objectified, made into an "other" that is somehow different and less human than we are. The religious conviction that challenges us to see the "image of God" in every person is an absolute barrier to the practice of torture.

6) Tolerance for Civilian Casualties

The detainee scandal distracted attention from another, equally alarming consequence of the occupation: a growing tolerance for civilian casualties in U.S. counter-insurgency military operations.

See Appendix 4 B. Mortality Before and After the War, The Lancet

⁸ Wallis, Jim, "The Theology of Torture". *Sojourners Magazine*. August 2004, Vol. 33, No. 8, pp.5.

⁹ Christian Aid UK, "Fuelling suspicion: the coalition and Iraq's oil billions", 28 June 2004, <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/310iraqoil/index.htm>

¹⁰ Wallis, Jim, "The Theology of Torture". *Sojourners Magazine*. August 2004, Vol. 33, No. 8, pp.5.

III. Summary of Positions *Before* the War in Iraq

1) Churches Stand Against Pre-emptive War, Unilateral Use of Force

Churches called upon their members to act in a manner consistent with their faith and conscience. One such plea, from the US National Council of Churches, read:

“As people of faith, we believe that God calls us to paths of peace rooted in mercy and justice. In the midst of conflict, violence, and death, we will not stray from that path. Instead, we recommit ourselves to God's vision of peace and will strive to build a world of greater understanding, compassion and care, until we can live without the threat of war and all people can live in peace.

“It is the responsibility of all people of faith to call the sacredness of life to the attention of political leaders who seem to be forgetting that life belongs to God and is sacred. In the Bible the vision to which people of faith are called to counter evil with good includes seeking peace and pursuing it. This is not a passive stance – it means actively doing everything possible to avoid war and to seek peace. We care for the children, young people, women and men of Iraq – Muslims, Christians and people of other faiths living in Iraq. Our faith calls us to love our neighbours as ourselves.”

Recommendations¹¹:

In US during the *Interfaith Summit* in Chicago, Illinois on April 30, 2003, 75 Muslim, Christian, Jewish and other faith leaders across the United States have release a joint declaration issuing guidelines to peace.¹² The summit addressed the humanitarian, spiritual and civil costs of war and its ramifications. The summit participants' "Urgent Call for Reflection, Hope and Action" calls on the President to:

- draw back from the use and threat of "first strike" war;
- draw back from unilateral US control over the reconstruction of Iraq;
- bring the US occupation to a prompt end by transferring to the United Nations and multilateral, non-governmental organizations the authority to work with the Iraqi people toward Iraq's own reconstruction;
- make available US resources as part of a world effort to serve the needs and decisions of the Iraqi people.

In the midst of the war, Churches for Middle East Peace pledged their efforts to work actively for peace and to urge the U.S. government to¹³:

- bring hostilities to a swift end,
- take measures to protect civilians and non-combatants,
- abide by the Geneva Conventions and international law in the conduct of war and in its aftermath,
- support efforts to alleviate the humanitarian crisis that will result from the war,
- support multilateral measures under the leadership of the United Nations to rebuild Iraq and protect the Iraqi people, bolster regional arms control measures following the war, and provide concrete and immediate leadership to the process of

¹¹ War in Iraq Faith Group Response Summaries: http://www.faihandvalues.com/channels/iraq_faith.asp
Also, Statements Against Iraq War: <http://www.betterworldlinks.org/book60a.htm>

¹² The National Council of Churches, USA, April 30, 2003. <http://nccusa.org/news/03news51.html>

¹³ Churches for Middle East Peace, "U.S. Church Leaders Issue Statement on Iraq War", 20 March 2003, <http://www.cmep.org>

establishing a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel.

Following a team visit to Baghdad by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches¹⁴ the Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the WARC issued the following statement opposing the war on Iraq:

“War on Iraq is simply wrong. Christian faith and tradition lead the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to this conclusion. We felt the pain of the people of Iraq, and saw the devastation caused by the wars they have been through and the sanctions still in place. Everything points to the senselessness and callousness of war at this time. The victims will be poor innocent civilians of Iraq and the region.

“A war on Iraq would violate the UN Charter and international law. No nation has the right to attack another. A reference to pre-emptive self-defence by the US and the UK governments is without justification in international law, especially when there is little evidence of an intended strike from the target. With a United Nations Charter which is unambiguously committed to peaceful solutions, it is difficult to imagine the legality of a UN resolution which would allow any nation and its allies to attack Iraq.”

2) Churches Stand For Saving Lives, Basic Rights and the Peace and Sanity of their Members

Roman Catholic Church

Pope John Paul II denounced the war against Iraq in these terms¹⁵ : "When war, as in these days in Iraq, threatens the fate of humanity, it is ever more urgent to proclaim, with a strong and decisive voice, that only peace is the road to follow to construct a more just and united society," John Paul said. "Violence and arms can never resolve the problems of men," the report quoted the Pope saying. He also added that there is no legal or moral justification for military action.

Several other Catholic religious orders have called on the international community to ensure that US-led forces in Iraq respect international law and that the United Nations be given a more active role in the country. "We are seriously concerned about the ongoing violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Iraq," said Philippe LeBlanc, the Director of *Dominicans for Justice and Peace*.

Orthodox Christians¹⁶

“As we find healing in Christ, who made us responsible for his sacred gift of life, God created us in his image and likeness, and we best reflect Christ, who neither killed anyone nor blessed anyone to kill, by loving, helping, and forgiving.

“The Orthodox Christians call on the United States and the United Nations to follow diplomatic paths predicated on mercy, honesty, and justice, and to seek peacefully negotiated resolutions to the impasse in Iraq. An attack on Iraq will be seen by many as an attack on all Arabic and Islamic States.”

¹⁴ World Alliance of Reformed Churches, “War on Iraq is simply wrong”, February 21 2003, http://www.urc.org.uk/iraq_2003/war_on_iraq_is_simply_wrong.htm

¹⁵ 20 March 2003, <http://www.betterworldlinks.org/book60a.htm>

¹⁶ Orthodox Peace Fellowship: A Plea for Peace, <http://www.incommunion.org/resources/iraq.asp>

Middle East Council of Churches¹⁷

“MECC is committed to peace that comes through the power of the Word to establish justice, and champions the cause of the poor and downtrodden. Apart from its humanitarian concerns for the Iraqi people who, for over a decade, have been ground down by sanctions and daily air raids, the MECC is committed to Iraq not least of all because of the cries of its member churches there for peace and sanity. We believe that through peaceful intervention the moral force of truth can break the cycle of violence in Iraq, in Palestine, and throughout the world. There is a whole population of ordinary and decent people whose desire is survival with dignity. Violence will only cause their circumstances to deteriorate further. What is needed is a sustained and determined diplomatic and political effort that engages the Iraqi government directly, and a sustained campaign to re-empower the Iraqi people and restore their dignity. From the churches’ point of view, it is also consistent with the priorities of the gospel that seeks healing for the nations and dignity for human beings.”

3) Churches Warn Against High Costs of War: Human and Financial

The concern in much of the faith community has been expressed about the insufficient attention that has been given to the potential human cost of war with Iraq.¹⁸ War will cause hunger, homelessness, pollution, sickness and death. Many in the faith community are concerned about US troops and civilians, Iraqi troops and civilians and all others who will be harmed as a result of armed conflict. Faith communities, usually called on after casualties occur, have been speaking out for peaceful alternatives that avoid the death and destruction that war brings. A document titled "Words of Reflection" urged Americans not to forget "the continuing suffering of the Iraqi people, which demands large-scale international humanitarian relief."¹⁹

The graphic on the next page reflects spending on Iraq in relation to

- the cost of health care for all children in the US
- the cost of clean water worldwide
- total US foreign aid
- the global response to HIV/AIDS.

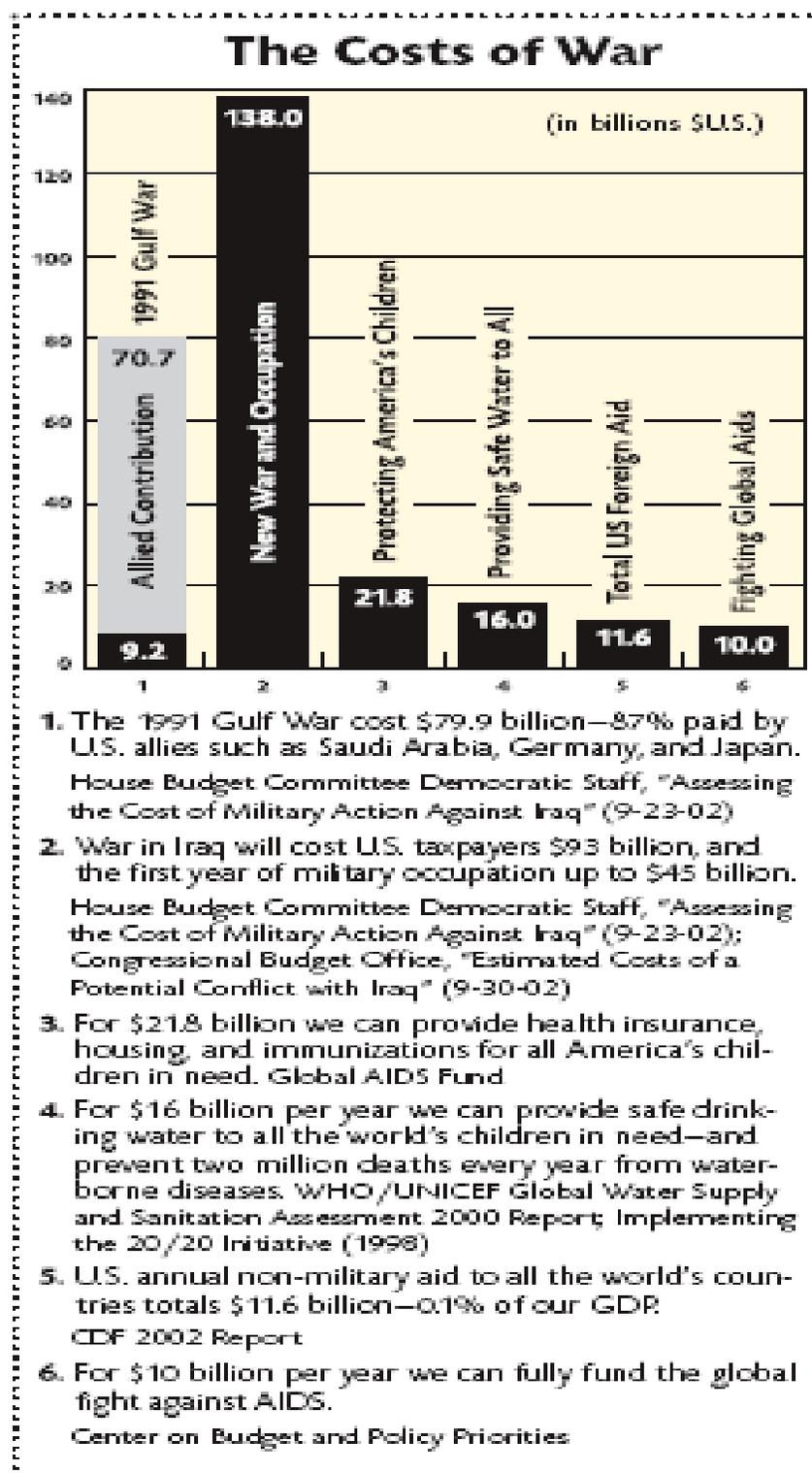
The graph was compiled at a time when the rate of expenditure on the US military presence in Iraq was \$4 billion per month. Recently notice was given by the US government that appropriations for military activity in Iraq are projected to grow to about \$200 billion—an estimate used by critics during the period leading up the conflict. This will be 150% of the figure in the graph below. Also, the rate of spending has reportedly increased to about \$5.2 billion per month, which is an expenditure of \$1 million every eight minutes, or \$2000 each second.

See graph on next page.

¹⁷ Middle East Council of Churches, Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, General Secretary, “Statement on recent situation concerning Iraq”, 8/5/2002, <http://www.mecchurches.org/posandpress/news.asp?id=88>

¹⁸ Faith Community Event Calls Attention to Potential Human Cost of War: March 14, 2003. <http://www.mnchurches.org/media/pdfs/news/20030314.nxr.pdf>

¹⁹ The National Council of Churches, USA, April 30, 2003. <http://nccusa.org/news/03news51.html>



From Church World Service, "The War on Iraq: What We Can Do for Peace - A New Resource from Church World Service", http://www.churchworldservice.org/pdf_files/CWSCESRRResource1.pdf

IV. Appendices:

Appendix 4A. Mortality Before and After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: Cluster Sample Survey

As published in The Lancet on-line, 29/10/04. This summary page provided for personal usage only. For wider usage, terms of use, and the full report, please visit:

<http://image.thelancet.com/extras/04art10342web.pdf>

By Les Roberts, Riyadh Lafta, Richard Garfield, Jamal Khudhairi, Gilbert Burnham

SUMMARY

Background

In March, 2003, military forces, mainly from the USA and the UK, invaded Iraq. We did a survey to compare mortality during the period of 14·6 months before the invasion with the 17·8 months after it.

Methods

A cluster sample survey was undertaken throughout Iraq during September, 2004. 33 clusters of 30 households each were interviewed about household composition, births, and deaths since January, 2002. In those households reporting deaths, the date, cause, and circumstances of violent deaths were recorded. We assessed the relative risk of death associated with the 2003 invasion and occupation by comparing mortality in the 17·8 months after the invasion with the 14·6-month period preceding it.

Findings

The risk of death was estimated to be 2·5-fold (95% CI 1·6-4·2) higher after the invasion when compared with the preinvasion period. Two-thirds of all violent deaths were reported in one cluster in the city of Falluja. If we exclude the Falluja data, the risk of death is 1·5-fold (1·1-2·3) higher after the invasion. We estimate that 98000 more deaths than expected (8000-194000) happened after the invasion outside of Falluja and far more if the outlier Falluja cluster is included. The major causes of death before the invasion were myocardial infarction, cerebrovascular accidents, and other chronic disorders whereas after the invasion violence was the primary cause of death. Violent deaths were widespread, reported in 15 of 33 clusters, and were mainly attributed to coalition forces. Most individuals reportedly killed by coalition forces were women and children. The risk of death from violence in the period after the invasion was 58 times higher (95% CI 8·1-419) than in the period before the war.

Interpretation

Making conservative assumptions, we think that about 100000 excess deaths, or more have happened since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Violence accounted for most of the excess deaths and air strikes from coalition forces accounted for most violent deaths. We have shown that collection of public-health information is possible even during periods of extreme violence. Our results need further verification and should lead to changes to reduce non-combatant deaths from air strikes.

Appendix 4B. Iraq – Country in Crisis, especially for Children

THE BIG PICTURE [from UNICEF]

Children make up almost half of Iraq's population, which is now close to 25 million. Securing the rights of children not only guarantees the well-being of the present generation, but also that of future generations. However, many of their rights are denied, as illustrated by the following facts and figures

- Nearly one in four children aged between six and twelve do not attend school– 31.2 per cent of girls and 17.5 per cent of boys.
- Girls and women are facing a major learning gap. There has been a sharp decline in adult female literacy and nearly twice as many girls as boys are out of school.
- The rate of acute malnutrition among children has dropped from a high of 11 per cent in 1996 to 4 per cent this year. However, close to 1 million children under the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition.
- Infant mortality today (107 deaths per 1,000 live births) is more than double what it was at the end of the 1980s. The under-five mortality rate (131 deaths per 1,000 live births) is two-and-a-half times what it was in 1989.
- Preventable illnesses such as diarrhoea and respiratory infections account for 70 per cent of child deaths.
- The water supply system was heavily compromised during the 1990s. Restoration work is underway, but children and women are still exposed to water-related health hazards on a daily basis. Safe drinking water is a nation-wide problem and cases of diarrhoea have increased from an average of 3.8 episodes per child/year in 1990 to nearly 15 episodes per by 1996. During the same period, typhoid fever increased from 2,240 to over 27,000 cases.
- There is an increase in the number of children at work, as well as in the number of orphans needing state assistance which existing institutions are unable to provide.
- There has been a sharp increase in maternal mortality because women are not getting emergency obstetric care for complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

It is important to distinguish the different causes for this situation. There are immediate, underlying and basic causes.

- Immediate causes directly relate to life, survival and development rights, and include disease and malnutrition, with preventable illnesses such as diarrhoea and respiratory infections accounting for 70 per cent of child mortality.
- Underlying causes affect the well-being and development of children. These causes include the lack of resources to rehabilitate service sectors, including health, water and sanitation, and education, as well as Iraq's electricity "deficit."
- Basic causes are systems-related, as well as crises and sanctions-related. This includes the effects of three major wars, civil strife, over a decade of sanctions, inadequate resource distribution, poor institutional capacity and inadequate human resources.

Sanctions-related basic causes have been partially addressed by the lifting of sanctions through Security Council Resolution 1483 of 22 May 2003 can only be addressed in the context of an international political resolution to the present situation. However, reversing the trends towards degradation of the last two decades will be one of the major challenges of the reconstruction effort. This will include restoring the delivery of high quality social services for children, improving the distribution of resources and building the capacity of existing institutions. Unless basic causes leading to the denial of

children's rights to life, survival, and education are addressed, the best that can be hoped for from international interventions is to halt further deterioration

Efforts have so far addressed some of the immediate causes and underlying causes, but have not comprehensively addressed basic causes. UNICEF's interventions range from education, health, nutrition, water and environmental sanitation and child protection, to rights-based advocacy and women's rights. UNICEF believes that promoting the rights of children, as well as of women, in Iraq is a top priority. Rights-based advocacy could promote the understanding necessary to:

- Secure the resources necessary to rehabilitate key service sectors in a sustained and sustainable manner
- Support a shift from humanitarian efforts to comprehensive long-term development planning
- Support a review of counterproductive policies, such as supplying breast milk substitutes to families with babies.

For more, visit http://www.unicef.org/emerg/iraq/index_bigpicture.html

Appendix 4C. Church Leaders United Against the War in Iraq

Statement from European church leaders, meeting in Berlin, February 5, 2003, convened by World Council of Churches in consultation with Conference of European Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, and the Middle East Council of Churches, hosted by the Evangelical Church in Germany.

1. As church leaders of Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, and the Pacific, we remain extremely concerned with the continued calls for military action against Iraq by the US and some European governments. As people of faith, our love of neighbour compels us to oppose war and to seek peaceful resolution of conflicts. As churches we pray for peace and freedom, justice and safety for the people of Iraq and in the Middle East as a whole. Such prayer obliges us to be instruments of peace.
2. We deplore the fact that the most powerful nations of this world again regard war as an acceptable instrument of foreign policy. This creates an international culture of fear, threat and insecurity.
3. We cannot accept the stated objectives of a war against Iraq, as laid out by these governments, in particular the US. Pre-emptive military strike and war as a means to change the regime of a sovereign state are immoral and in violation of the UN Charter. We appeal to the Security Council to uphold the principles of the UN Charter which strictly limit the legitimate use of military force and to refrain from creating negative precedents and lowering the threshold for using violent means to solve international conflicts.
4. We believe that military force is an inappropriate means to achieve disarmament of any Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. We insist that the carefully designed mechanisms of the UN weapons inspections be given the time needed to complete their work.
5. All UN member states have to comply with binding UN resolutions and resolve conflicts by peaceful means. Iraq can be no exception. We call on the Government of Iraq to destroy any weapons of mass destruction and related research and production facilities. Iraq must cooperate fully with UN weapons inspectors, and guarantee full respect of the civil and political, economic, social and cultural human rights for all its citizens. The people in Iraq must be given hope that there are alternatives to both dictatorship and war.

6. A war would have unacceptable humanitarian consequences, including large-scale displacement of people, the breakdown of state functions, the possibility of civil war and major unrest in the whole region. The plight of Iraqi children and the unnecessary deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis over the past 12 years of sanctions regime weighs heavily on our hearts. In the present situation, we strongly affirm long-standing humanitarian principles of unconditional access to people in need.
7. We further caution against the potential social, cultural, and religious as well as diplomatic long term consequences of such a war. Further fueling the fires of violence that are already consuming the region will only exacerbate intense hatred strengthening extremist ideologies and breeding further global instability and insecurity. As church leaders we have a moral and pastoral responsibility to challenge xenophobia in our own countries as well as allay the fears of many in the Muslim world, that the so called Western Christianity is against their culture, religion and values. We should seek co-operation for peace, justice and human dignity.
8. All governments, in particular the members of the Security Council have the responsibility to consider the whole complexity of this issue. All peaceful and diplomatic means to compel Iraq to comply with UN Security Council resolutions have not been exhausted.
9. For us it is a spiritual obligation, grounded in God's love for all humanity, to speak out against war in Iraq. Through this message we send a strong sign of solidarity and support, to churches in Iraq, the Middle East and in the USA. We pray that God will guide those responsible to take decisions based on careful reflections, moral principles and high legal standards. We invite all churches to join us in this act of witness and to pray for and encourage participation of all people in the struggle for a peaceful resolution of this conflict.