

More information

The Afghan Victim Memorial Project

<http://pubpages.unh.edu/%7Emwherold/memorial.htm> . This site has names of individuals and reports on violent incidents.

Amnesty International - www.amnesty.org - has a special Iraq information page.

Christian Peace Witness for Iraq - www.christianpeacewitness.org - an ecumenical group based in the USA, committed to raising a Christian voice for peace. Website offers prayer and liturgy ideas. (Their national day of action is 29 April 2009.)

Iraq Body Count - www.iraqbodycount.org and Iraq Coalition Casualty Count www.icasualties.org/oif - give details and names of civilians and military killed in Iraq.

Iraqi Christians in Need - www.icin.org.uk - a UK registered charity aimed at relief of hardship and sickness amongst Christians who live or formerly lived in Iraq.

Islamic Relief (IR) - www.islamic-relief.com - an international relief and development charity with projects in Iraq. Founded in the UK in 1984.

Justice Not Vengeance - www.j-n-v.org - an anti-war group set up to oppose the US-UK 'war on terrorism', and campaign for a peaceful resolution of international conflicts.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - www.unhcr.org.

Voices for Creative Nonviolence - www.vcnv.org - has longstanding record of active nonviolent resistance to US war-making in Iraq.

Voices in the Wilderness UK - www.voicesuk.org - campaigns both here and in the US against US-UK policy towards Iraq.

Liturgy Resources here: http://peace.mennolink.org/iraq_a_prayers.html and also on For and Pax Christi websites

Fellowship of Reconciliation, England

01865 748796
office@for.org.uk
www.for.org.uk

Pax Christi British Section

020 8203 4884
info@paxchristi.org.uk
www.paxchristi.org.uk

Supported by: Network of Christian Peace Organisations - www.ncpo.org.uk
Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, Baptist Peace Fellowship, Clergy Against Nuclear Arms, Christian CND, CAAT Christian Network, Christian Peacemaker Teams UK, Church & Peace, Congregational Peace Fellowship, London Mennonite Centre, Methodist Peace Fellowship, Quaker Peace & Social Witness, United Reformed Church Peace Fellowship.



20 March 2009

Christian Peace Witness for Afghanistan and Iraq a call for remembrance, prayer and action

We lament and mourn with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq

"I set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life".

Deuteronomy 30:19

*We were hoping for peace - no good came of it! For the moment of cure -
nothing but terror!*

Jr 14:19

During Lent, Christians remember Jesus' path to the Cross - the betrayal, the torture, the abandonment. This Lent we invite you to also remember the suffering of the peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq

The people of Afghanistan are now living through their eighth year of war following the tragedy of 11 September 2001. 20 March 2009 marks the 6th anniversary of the start of the war with Iraq. Join with other Christians in the UK and the USA in **recalling** the suffering of the in **repenting** for the role our nation has played, in **challenging** the silence of our Churches, in **praying** for forgiveness and healing and in **committing** ourselves to action for peace with justice for the people of Afghanistan and Iraq and neighbouring countries.

We remember

Afghanistan

- A new study by Professor Marc Herold (University of New Hampshire) reports the number of Afghan civilians killed by US/NATO forces since 2005 at between 2,699 - 3,273. As of 30 January 2009, a total of 143 British Forces personnel or MOD civilians have died while serving in Afghanistan since the start of operations in October 2001.
- 3 million Afghans still live as refugees in Pakistan and Iran. Since 2002, more than 5 million Afghans have returned to their country. Another half million internally displaced people have returned home.
- In an Oct/Nov 2008 poll, 68% of the British public said that all British troops should be withdrawn from Afghanistan within 12 months.

- According to the MoD, the UK has spent over £1.5 billion on military operations in Afghanistan over and above the normal military budget.

Iraq

- According to Iraq Body Count, there have been between 90,000 and 98,000 violent civilian deaths since the 2003 invasion. Over 1.6million people have been displaced internally within Iraq.
- In 2008 Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho of Mosul was kidnapped and murdered. The Christian community of Iraq has decreased from 1.4 million in 2003 to around 600,000 today and continues to experience persecution.
- A total of 178 British Armed Forces personnel or MOD civilians have died in Iraq since the start of the campaign. 4,100 British personnel are currently serving in Southern Iraq.

The budgetary cost to the UK of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through to 2010 will total more than £18 billion. If the social costs are added, the total impact on the UK will exceed £20 billion
 The Three Trillion Dollar War: Joseph E Stiglitz & Linda J Bilmes, 2008

We pray

Lamentation

Group 1

Look, O Lord, and consider!
 The young and the old are lying on the ground in the streets;
 our young men and young women have fallen by the sword.

Group 2

For these things we weep;
 our eyes flow with tears.
 Our elders sit in silence; our young bow their heads to the ground.
 We seek a comforter, one to revive our courage.

Group 1

Cry aloud to the Lord! Let tears stream down like a torrent.
 Arise, cry out in the night!
 Pour out your heart like water

before the Lord!
 Lift up your hands to God, for the lives of your children!

Group 2

But call this to mind, and therefore have hope:

Together

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
 God's mercies never come to an end;
 They are new every morning;
 Great is your faithfulness,
 O Lord!*

Amen

(excerpts from Lamentations 1-3)

We come to you, God Creator.

You are the source of life and beauty and power.

Your son Jesus is the way of faith and hope and love.

Your Spirit is the fire of love, the fount of wisdom,
 the bond of unity.

You call us at all times to be people of the beatitudes,
 Witnesses to the Gospel of peace and love and forgiveness.

You call us at this time, when war and rumours of war,
 weigh heavily on the peoples of Afghanistan,
 Iraq and the Middle East.

Their lives are already broken by suffering and violence.

We renew our acceptance of your call.

We promise to work:

To bring the light of the Gospel to those living in darkness,

To bring the hope of the Gospel to those living in despair,

To bring the healing of the Gospel to the lonely,

the disadvantaged, the marginalized,

And to bring the peace of the Gospel to a divided world.

Amen.

We act

- **Share** the information in this leaflet with others in your community, and find out more from the websites listed overleaf.
- **Arrange** a vigil or prayer service in your town centre on 20 March to remind people of the on-going conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq. You could read out the names of some of those killed in the war as a part of your vigil. You will find helpful resources on the websites given below.
Let us know your plans so that we can share them with others.
- **Ensure** that your church, community, or family, pray during Lent for the people of Afghanistan and Iraq and for a lasting and sustainable peace in those countries.
- **Write** to your local MP - pressing for the UK Government to take active steps now in the reconstruction and social development of Afghanistan and Iraq. Express your concern for the on-going plight refugees, asking how the Government is responding to this crisis. Ask about the situation of Christian and other minorities in Iraq - how are their rights being safeguarded?
- **Support** non-governmental organisations and faith groups working for human rights, or with refugees, in the UK and in the region.