

US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation

Press Advisory

Over 120 Coalitions & Organizations Sign Open Letter to the Middle East

August 24, 2006

Groups protest indiscriminate attacks on civilians, Israel's actions, US policy

Over 120 coalitions and organizations, representing thousands of people throughout the United States, signed a letter of solidarity with people in the Middle East suffering from the impact of US and Israeli actions. The Open Letter was organized by the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, a nationwide coalition of over 200 member groups. The first signatory was United for Peace and Justice, the largest anti-war coalition in the United States, with over 1,400 member groups.

The signatories called Israel's attacks on Gaza and Lebanon following the capture of its soldiers "vastly disproportionate" and condemned the humanitarian catastrophe it had created among Lebanese and Palestinians. They called for an end to "US military and political support to Israel's violations of international law" and to "the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, also in violation of international law."

The letter speaks directly to the region's people: "We want you to know that when we see and hear the news we are imagining your families, your homes, your hearts, your hopes, your terror. We are working hard for peace with justice. The pro-war forces arrayed against us are far more powerful than us. The road to peace is far too long, and many will suffer. But we vow to do all we can to bring an end to the US role in this violence."

Although a fragile cessation of hostilities has taken hold in Lebanon, Israel continues to attack Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and besieged Gaza Strip. In Iraq, 100 civilians are being killed every day. Mark Lance, co-chair of the US Campaign, stated, "We are US citizens and we refuse to be counted among those who kill." Writer and activist Bill Fletcher, a member of the US Campaign advisory board, said, "We, people of conscience, cannot permit this to continue."

The poet Kathy Engel, also a US Campaign board member, said, "There are times in our lives when we have no choice but to act and speak on behalf of what we know to be justice. I've been in different war zones but when I went to the refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza it was the worst thing I've ever seen and we're all responsible, especially US taxpayers."

The Open Letter is being disseminated today throughout the United States and the Middle East. The letter and list of signatories are at www.endtheoccupation.org

For interviews or more information, contact office@endtheoccupation.org

August 2006

**Open Letter Re US Policy in the Middle East
From People in the United States Who Believe that
Only Justice Will Bring Peace**
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Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dear Sisters and Brothers Living With War,

We write to you in anguish, to express what cannot possibly be contained in words. We need a new language to speak about what humanity means and still can mean, what our humanity must create in this danger.

We send our solidarity, our commitment, our love. We write to let you know that many in this country are organizing, educating, protesting, and engaging in nonviolent civil disobedience to change US policy in the Middle East.

We are opposed to and greatly saddened by indiscriminate attacks on civilians, whether Lebanese, Palestinians, Iraqis, or Israelis, and the horrific death, destruction, and displacement that is taking place. We believe that Israel's attacks following the capture of two Israeli soldiers by Hizbullah on July 12 and an Israeli soldier by Hamas and other Palestinian groups on June 25 were vastly disproportionate and are in no way commensurate with a right to self-defense as defined under international law. Israel's attacks on Gaza have created a humanitarian catastrophe, as has its devastation of Lebanon's infrastructure and of whole Lebanese neighborhoods and villages.

We reaffirm that Israel's occupation and siege of the Palestinian West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, its dispossession of the Palestinians in 1948 and continued denial of their human rights, occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, occupation of Lebanon, and imprisonment of Palestinians and Lebanese, are among the root causes of this conflict. Without the implementation of international law applicable to this conflict there will never be peace.

We strongly oppose US military and political support to Israel's violations of international law, and we strongly oppose the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, also in violation of international law.

We are women and men of all ages, from all parts of our country, all professions, all faiths, all races, all national backgrounds. We are not reflected in the mainstream media because of the stronghold of fear and lack of information strangling the imagination and collective public voice of this country. But we are here and we want you to know you are not alone. We work in small community groups, in nationwide coalitions, in places of worship and as artists, writers, teachers. We want you to

know that when we see and hear the news we are imagining your families, your homes, your hearts, your hopes, your terror. We want you to know.
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We are working hard for peace with justice. The pro-war forces arrayed against us are far more powerful than us. The road to peace is far too long, and many will suffer. But we vow to do all we can to bring an end to the US role in this violence.

* We put pressure on our elected representatives to support an immediate ceasefire and then negotiate a just peace. Although the war on Iraq still produces its unbearable toll of daily death, many more voices in Congress oppose the war since we came together to try to prevent the war and then to oppose it. And although Congress still expresses its misguided and uncritical support for Israel's actions in Palestine and Lebanon, our efforts have contributed to unprecedented debates on the causes of this conflict. And we will not give up.

* We are educating US citizens on the consequences of our government's foreign policy. We organize teach-ins in places of worship, trade unions, schools and other public forums. We ground our teaching in universal human rights and international law. Many of us promote the call to support boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel until it upholds international law, as called for by Palestinian civil society in July 2005 and by Lebanese cultural figures in July 2006.

* We seek to amplify the voices of those suffering as we support the steadfastness of the people of Palestine, Iraq, and Lebanon, and the stand taken by Israeli and US citizens who refuse to serve in armies of occupation and who work for justice and peace.

* We seek as well to expose and reverse the damage to our own country. We know that militarism destroys our economy, our communities and our humanity. We know that many who fight our government's wars are the young and poor who feel they have no other options. We know that our schools, our jobs, our democracy, and our civil rights are held hostage to the military economy that currently drives our government. Our struggle is thus one of solidarity, not of charity.

* We take our protests to the streets in demonstrations and vigils - outside Israeli Consulates, US Federal Buildings, and in all public spaces. We call for an end of US military and political support to Israel's violations of international law, and of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, also in violation of international law.

We cannot and will not remain silent. We will work until our country stands for peace and justice in all countries throughout the world.

Signed by the following organizations

The Steering Committee and Staff of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, a nationwide coalition of 200 groups and organizations

United for Peace and Justice, a nationwide coalition of 1,400 organizations

Jewish Voice for Peace, a national, Jewish-American group dedicated to changing American Middle East policy

National Assoc. of Muslim American Women, an accredited humanitarian NGO

Zeitouna: Arab & Jewish Women Working for Peace & Justice

Free Press Houston, A magazine dedicated to telling the truth

Universal Coalition for Interfaith and Intercultural Knowledge, For GENUINE peace, shared planet, mutuality, care

Just Peace Productions, Public Access Megaphone Network for The People

W.N.Y. Peace Center, conflict resolution in schools, Latin Am. work, and disarmament

WILF

MAM Intercontinental

Nonviolence International,

Bloomington Peace Action Coalition (BPAC), committed to ending the war on Iraq

People for Peace and Justice, working for peace for 4 years.

Miami for Peace, primary focus-end the war in Iraq

Peace Farm

DC Poets Against the War,

Mountain Forum for Peace, working for a just and peaceful world.

Sacramento Progressive Alliance, Social Justice Activism in California's Capital City

Western Washington Fellowship of Reconciliation, working for a just peace through nonviolence

Bay Area Women in Black, Jewish feminists and allies working for peace and justice

Volunteers for TAWO, volunteer gardeners

Progressive Democrats of America, executive director

South Bay Mobilization for Peace and Justice, We oppose war and occupation everywhere!

ThinkingPeople, a peace and social justice org.

Justice & Witness Ministries, NY Conf, United Church of Christ

Not in Our Name Project, National Anti-War/Social-Justice network

Two-Edged Sword Incorporated, We are Defenders of Rights

Women in Black Asheville, North Carolina, Weekly public silent vigil mourning violence

Palestine Solidarity Committee Seattle, direct action, education for public awareness.

Interfaith Peace-Builders, Israel/Palestine Delegations - Education & Advocacy in US

Action Center For Justice, Dedicated to abolishing war, racism and injustice

Rose Gardens For Peace, American Indian organization promoting peace in Lebanon

Vancouver for Peace, working for peace, justice and nonviolence

Forum For Peace and Justice

Green Party, USA: understands that there can never be any peace without justice.

Sound Nonviolent Opponents of War (SNOW), coalition of neighborhood groups and organizations

<http://www.wearewideawake.org>, Third Intifada: Nonviolent Resistance +Truth

Women in Black, Tacoma , In silent public mourning, we urge Peace

Women in Black - Detroit, We are women of varied ethnic and racial heritages who gather to oppose the use of violence and terror as a means to political ends

Jews for a Free Palestine,

Women in Black and Western Carolinians for Peace and Justice

Poets Against War

Peace Coalition of Southern Illinois,

MidEast: JustPeace, Work to educate and change US/Israeli policies.

Tampa Bay Campaign/Films For Justice In Palestine

Howard County Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation

Arab American Institute, We are for democracy and peace for all individuals

Brudging Consultancy Services, Diversity and Management Development Training Company

Reapalife, Pan-African organization opposed to colonialism, neocolonialism, and Eurocentrism

American Arab Anti Discrimination Committee Phoenix, Concerned citizens defending yours and our rights

Peace Action Youngstown for a Sane World, truth to power; educate, motivate, ORGANIZE!

Women's Advocacy Organization, WAO is a CSUS campus club

RHFACTOR - Rock Hill For ACTION to Organize Resistance,

DeKalb Interfaith Network for Peace and Justice, Dedicated to ending war, peace, and justice

Break the Silence, Art & Culture to support resistance & mobilize solidarity.

WESPAC Foundation, We are a peace and justice action network.

US Peace Council

Peace Action, country's largest peace group with 100,000 members

Carolina Peace Resource Center, Mideast Issues Coordinator for Carolina Peace

Aiken Peace, Local peace group, affiliate of Carolina Peace

Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition/Atlanta, Network of community, faith, and student organizations and individuals

Syracuse Peace Council, Grassroots peace and social justice organization.

MSA West, A coalition of Muslim Student Associations across the West Coast

Global Exchange, U.S. based International Human Rights Organization

Committees of Correspondence for Democracy & Socialism,

ICCNC, Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California

Monterey County Citizens for Middle East Peace, A grassroots, multifaith organization to affect U.S. policy

Sitkans for Peace and Justice, We organize peace activities in Sitka, Alaska

Jeannette Rankin Peace Center, Local non-profit working to build a non-violent, socially just and sustainable world.

CODEPINK: Women for Peace, Women's movement working for global peace and human rights

Boston Coalition for Palestinian Rights, change US policy towards Israel/Palestine/region

Women in Black-Los Angeles, WIB-LA supports justice and peace in the Mideast

Brooklyn Parents for Peace, Brooklyn residents, including parents and non-parents

Not In My Name, Predominantly Jewish, Chicago-based, anti-occupation group

Codepink Pittsburgh, Coordinator Codepink Pittsburgh

Colorado Palestine Solidarity Campaign, works steadily to advance the cause of justice for the Palestinian people.

Out Against War: LGBT & Friends Coalition for Peace & Justice, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender antiwar group

Islamic Development Group, A Community Education Group

Progressive Democrats/Santa Monica Mountains, Progressive Democrats/Santa Monica Mountains is a chapter of Progressive Democrats of America dedicated to ending war and electing pro-peace Democrats

Bethlehem (NY) Neighbors for Peace, Albany NY area peace group:
www.bethlehemforpeace.org

Unitarian Church - Portland, Oregon,

Alameda Peace Network, Devoted to finding nonviolent conflict resolution

Pax Christi Will County, Will County Chapter of Catholic Peace Organization

BIZART, DEDICATED TO PEACE, FREEDOM AND JUSTICE FOR PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE.

WIAMEP: Washington Interfaith alliance for Middle East Peace, Interfaith organization seeking peace with justice

Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, cultural arts/social justice regional organization

Philadelphia Regional Anti-War Network, PRAWN Opposes the War on Iraq

Veterans for Peace, Pensacola, Florida, Chapter 135, Former military members now working for Peace

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE TO DEFEND CONSTITUTIONAL WELFARE RIGHTS, Executive Director & International Representative, ECDCWR--USA

Northwest VEG, Compassionate Living Grounded in Vegetarian Choices

St. Louis Branch, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, International organization of women to promote peace

Portland Peaceful Response Coalition, Grassroots organization working for peace through justice.

pdxjustice Media Productions, Community radio and television production organization.

Marin Friends Meeting, As Quakers, we support non-violence everywhere.

split britches theater company, Lesbian Performance Company devoted to new writing

Kalamazoo Nonviolent Opponents of War, We oppose violence, militarism, and military occupation

Court St Joseph #139, Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Christian Women Who Support Peace

Idaho Peace Coalition, volunteers dedicated to compassionate and nonviolent action

Salina People for Peace, Co-moderator for Peace and Justice

World Can't Wait!, working to Drive out the Bush Regime

Cambridge United for Justice with Peace, peace & justice community group of UJP

Salem-Palestine Solidarity Group for Peace & Justice, Oregon activists working for justice in Palestine.

PeaceVermont, Peace and justice organization in central Vermont

Every Church A Peace Church, Promoting a registry listing of nonviolent churches.

After Downing Street, Coalition for peace and accountability

Bubbes & Zaydes (grandparents) for Peace in the Middle East, faith based activists for justice

Maine Haiti Solidarity, Active for justice in Haiti

Committee for peace in israel and Palestine (CoPIP)

Middle East Research and Information Project

N. C. Peace Action,

Culturally Speaking, Building bridges between Muslims and larger community.

Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel, Concerned Vermonters Against Israeli Occupation

Citizens for Justice in the Middle East--Kansas City, CJME educates/lobbies for M.E. justice/peace

Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights, Working to end the Israeli occupation

Student Peace Action Network, Students/youth organizing for peace and justice

LA Jews for Peace,

Lakeshore Peacemakers, We are peaceseeking locally and globally.

USC Students for Justice in Palestine, Campus organization dedicated to spreading awareness.

SUSTAIN-Philly: Stop US Tax Aid to Israel Now!, Local Philadelphia Palestine Solidarity group focused on US Aid to Israel