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Jewish Social Policy Action Network
Resolution on
The War in Iraq

In the pursuit of social justice, sometimes an issue arises that is so immense and daunting that we must not shirk from the effort to undertake our mission, "repair of the world." At these times our upraised voices may be most important and must be heard.

The war in Iraq hangs over our nation, transcending individuals or political parties. It is a cloud that only gets heavier: with close to 2,100 American lives lost, several times that number maimed, and an estimated 30,000 Iraqi fatalities, the war demands our thought and action.

This war began on the theory that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, a belief that has proven false. It was argued that the war was needed for regime change, to rid the world of a horrible dictator. The dictator is now in jail and his regime is history. It was claimed that the war was a battle against the terrorist organization Al Qaeda, but there is no evidence that terrorists operated in Iraq until after we concluded our battles with Saddam Hussein. And it is argued that reconsidering the role of the United States in Iraq disrespects the memory of those who gave their lives in this war, and gives comfort to our enemy. But failing to reconsider our role leaves our soldiers and Iraqis at great risk today and tomorrow. And there is the awful possibility, suggested by some, that this battle – pursued single mindedly - could go on for ten or twenty years.

Two years after President Bush declared that the major military action was over, daily reports arrive of bombings, mayhem and deaths of Americans, our allies and Iraqis. These events derive from terrorist activity, or civil war between Iraqi factions, or both. *Our occupation in Iraq is itself a major driving force behind the insurgency.* Indeed, reducing the size and visibility of the coalition forces in Iraq is a part of our counterinsurgency strategy.

Rep. John Murtha, a war veteran and highly knowledgeable source on defense and war issues, has pointed out the problems that Iraq is causing or worsening. He states: "The future of our military is at risk. Our military and their families are stretched thin. Many say that the Army is broken. Some of our troops are on their third deployment. Recruitment is down, even as our military has lowered its standards. Defense budgets are being cut. Personnel costs are skyrocketing, particularly in health care. ... We can not allow promises we have made to our military families in terms of service benefits, in terms of their health care, to be negotiated away. Procurement programs that ensure our military dominance cannot be negotiated away. We must be prepared. The war in Iraq has caused huge shortfalls at our bases in the U.S. Much of our ground equipment is worn

out and in need of either serious overhaul or replacement. ... We must rebuild our Army. ... The burden of this war has not been shared equally; the military and their families are shouldering this burden.”

Jewish law acknowledges the concept of *milhemet hova*, a war of self-defense. The war in Iraq might have begun in the belief that it was *hova*, but that is no longer the case. It is now *milhemet reshut*, a war of volition. So we must ask ourselves what interests of this nation require the continued bloodshed in Iraq.

To answer that question we must examine the reasons for our being in Iraq in the first instance. There are no weapons of mass destruction; the regime which needed change has been changed; our presence in Iraq is feeding the growth of Al Qaeda, not excising it; doing nothing does more to disrespect the role of the United States in Iraq and the memory of those who gave their lives in this war than our staying does; and reconsidering our role in Iraq would be supported by our allies more than it would give comfort to our enemy.

We must ask whether we are willing to shed more of our soldiers' blood in an effort that has already achieved all the goals it could.

Now we know, based on the reports of two bi-partisan commissions appointed by President Bush, the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, chaired by former Senator Charles Robb and Judge Laurence Silberman, and the 9/11 Commission, chaired by former Republican Governor Tom Kean and former Democratic Representative Lee Hamilton, that many of the premises on which the Congress, and the American public based their decisions were false: that no weapons of mass destruction were stored in Iraq; that there was no attempt on the part of the government of Saddam Hussein to purchase uranium from the nation of Niger during the years leading up to the invasion; that there were no ties between Saddam Hussein and the events of September 11, 2001; and that there was no cooperation between Iraq and Al Qaeda that has led to terrorist attacks. These mistakes – whether misrepresentations or misunderstandings – have significantly undermined American credibility.

Furthermore, lack of adequate planning for the aftermath of the invasion greatly aggravated chaos and instability in Iraq. Experts have widely criticized the lack of an adequate supply of flak jackets and Armored Personnel Carriers; the failure to protect American forces by guarding Saddam Hussein's ammunition dumps whose weapons now maim and kill American soldiers; the failure to keep an Iraqi army selectively intact (as we did in Kosovo); the failure to ensure the delivery of basic services to Iraqi citizens; and the refusal to accept the offers of the United Nations and individual countries that had not fought in the invasion to provide on-the-ground peacekeepers and reconstruction assistance. The result has been to provide fertile ground for the insurgency.

We call upon the Administration immediately to provide more transparency regarding all aspects of the war and a clear exit strategy to the American public with specific goals for troop withdrawal. Some withdrawal of troops should begin now that the parliamentary election has been held, with the continuation of withdrawal implemented as soon as possible in a way that maintains stability in the nation and empowers Iraqi forces to provide for their national security;

As citizens of a democracy, we have the tools to make a difference, and having those tools, we also have the obligation to use them. We must join the growing number of voices that are saying: our troops have fought valiantly and have done all they can reasonably be expected to do. Now the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq is impeding progress in creating a self-sufficient democracy there.

We must recognize that the time has come to let the Iraqis, armed now with a constitution, determine how they are to be governed. Our military has done everything that has been asked of them, and the U.S. can not accomplish anything further in Iraq militarily. **IT IS TIME TO BRING THE TROOPS HOME.**

We urge the Administration:

- To immediately redeploy U.S. troops consistent with the safety of U.S. forces
- To create a quick reaction force in the region,
- To create an over- the- horizon presence of Marines, and
- Henceforth to pursue security and stability in Iraq through diplomacy.

We call upon Congress:

- *To provide more diligent oversight of the war and the expenditures related to it,*
- *To promote efforts to bring about, as soon as feasible, a withdrawal that supports peace and stability,*
- *To ensure that the financial burden of the war fall not just on the poor and on future generations, but is shared equitably, and*
- *To establish a bipartisan, independent commission to determine the lessons learned from our strategic, intelligence, planning, and implementation failures before and during the war.*