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UN RESOLUTION ON IRAQ CALLS FOR COMPLIANCE AND COMMITMENT BY ALL, SAY QUAKER ORGANIZATIONS

For 350 years, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has witnessed against all war under any circumstance and provided aid to victims of war without discrimination. As Quaker service agencies and religious bodies, we have undertaken a range of activities related to Iraq including humanitarian assistance, research and policy work, enhancement of diplomatic activity, and advocacy at national and multinational levels since 1990.

On 8 November 2002, the Security Council (SC) of the United Nations (UN) unanimously passed Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1441, which addresses the resumption of weapons inspections and the disarmament of Iraq. We believe that this unanimous action by the SC requires compliance and commitment by all Member States, not just the government of Iraq, and that the use of force against Iraq is clearly a last resort, only to be considered and undertaken through further consultation at the SC. Recent statements and actions by the United States that Iraq is in “material breach” of the SCR 1441 through retaliatory action to US and UK bombings in the “no-fly zones” in Iraq only fuels conflict and endangers the vital opportunity for peace that the SCR 1441 seeks to secure and to which the US committed itself as a permanent member of the Security Council.

Since the events of 11 September 2001, we have been deeply concerned that member states should remain fully committed to the multilateral approach to resolving conflict and realizing justice and peace in the world. Threats of war against Iraq as a means of compliance with UN resolutions and “regime change”, advanced by the United States, have heightened this concern. Quakers are steadfastly against the threat or use of war or military intervention as a means to resolve any conflict or bring about change. In this light, we commend the United Nations and the Security Council for their efforts to find a resolution that would address the genuine concerns at hand concerning Iraq, to seek a peaceful solution, and to contain the threat of unilateral action by states’ governments.

SCR 1441 sets out three key goals:

1. Iraqi disarmament, not regime change: The UN Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which are charged with undertaking the inspections, must undertake realistic and competent inspections. The Iraqi Government must, finally, comply with resolutions regarding disarmament or face the undefined “serious consequences” noted in SCR 1441 (paragraph 13). Nowhere in the Resolution is there support for “regime change”. Indeed, “the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, Kuwait and neighbouring states” is a stated commitment for all Member States of the UN (preamble paragraph 15). This is an important policy shift by the United States, which requires recognition.

2. Force is an option of last resort: The use of force must be a last resort and many Member States of the UN have articulated this, along with public opinion worldwide. SCR 1441 may be the last opportunity for the world community to prevent war and, thus, we must work alongside each other to ensure that compliance is achieved and sincere good will to comply is recognized and supported if time lines and conditions set out in the Resolution prove unachievable.

3. Recommitment to multilateral dialogue and action through the Security Council. Contrary to expectations, the United States engaged in a lengthy and intense *multilateral* negotiation on Iraq.

This has served, in the immediate situation, to reaffirm the SC as the *sole* body with the authority to legitimize war against a Member State. SCR 1441 sets out that the SC will:

- A. Receive the inspection reports
- B. Assess and debate them
- C. Take appropriate action (with most members insisting on “proportionality” in the “consequences” approved).

By supporting SCR 1441, the US has obliged itself to work within the SC in resolving the extant concerns regarding Iraq. This is a positive development in US policy and action that requires recognition and accountability. The US must act honourably and not exploit potential “hidden triggers” in the Resolution or take unauthorized, unilateral action against Iraq.

SCR 1441 lays out clear and determined expectations of Iraq regarding compliance with previous resolutions by the Security Council, along with expanded powers and criteria with regards to the weapons inspections. We are concerned that the expanded expectations may be difficult to comply with. A specific example is the 30-day deadline (paragraph 3 of resolution) that requires the government of Iraq to provide to UNMOVIC, IAEA and the Security Council a declaration of all programmes to develop a wide range of weapons as well as locations of facilities, stocks of agents, etc. In looking towards the 8 December 2002 deadline, we hope that, if Iraq is demonstrating good faith in compiling with the requested declaration, that the SC will provide extended time in order for Iraq to fully comply.

We are concerned that this clause, among others, could be used to “trigger” military intervention as a solution to the compliance issue. If the exact terms of the SCR 1441 can be interpreted as unattainable, regardless of Iraqi efforts and intent, then there is the risk that the issue of non-compliance could be raised by a Member State at the Security Council table with a request to proceed with a military intervention in order to enforce compliance.

While the existence of such “triggers” is a present danger in the interpretation of SCR 1441, we ask, and expect, all members of the Security Council to work within the spirit of SCR 1441 to seek a peaceful, multilateral solution. The long and difficult negotiations of SCR 1441 required compromise on all sides. The unanimous vote simultaneously brings pressure to bear both on the government of Iraq to comply with the inspections and on all Member States to comply with the diplomatic process outlined.

As a result, we believe that war with Iraq is not inevitable. An agreed upon process has been approved by the SC, its Member States, and Iraq. This said, compliance by Iraq to the directive to disarm is an absolute necessity if war is to be prevented. In turn, Member States of the UN are bound to abide in good faith by the commitments made in SCR 1441 to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and the process outlined.

The humanitarian costs of war are enormous and, under the UN Charter, Member States are committed to pursuing peaceful solutions to prevent the scourge of war. We urge continued dialogue and cooperation amongst all concerned parties as this process unfolds.

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