

Beyond Iraq: Proclaiming a True Revolution of Values
Statement from the Religious Working Group on the World Bank/IMF
September 2005

The following statement was written by the Religious Working Group on the World Bank and IMF, with collegial organizations, in preparation for the civil society demonstrations planned for September 23-26, 2005. Many thousands of people will come to Washington D.C. to express their opposition to the war in Iraq, the destructive policies of the World Bank and IMF and torture. By this statement we intend to make more visible the connections between the war and economic violence and to reiterate our commitment as people of faith to work for peace, economic justice and ecological integrity.

As people of faith, our hearts are broken by the horrors of war and economic injustice. The war in Iraq and the devastation of unrelenting poverty evoke from us a cry for change. Nearly 40 years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called on the United States to cease the ways of military and economic violence and to seek the paths of peace and justice. Calling for “a radical revolution of values,” he said, “a true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies.”

We see today that war and economic deprivation are but two sides of the same coin. As the United States spends millions of public dollars a day perpetuating violence in Iraq, powerful economic forces, including the World Bank and IMF promote an economic model that exacerbates the gap between the rich and the poor while causing environmental destruction. By privatizing vital resources like water and services like health care and education and promoting a model of free trade that empowers transnational corporations at the expense of the poor, they are in effect globalizing poverty.

A true revolution of values will look upon the soaring military budget of the United States and crippling debt burdens across the global South, and contrast them with pennies that are spent on education, health care, social security and other basic services, and echo Dr. King’s dire warning that “a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

A true revolution of values will look on the military families in the United States and the families living under fire in Iraq who have both lost loved ones to this war, it will look on veterans who have lost limbs in the U.S. occupation and Iraqis who have lost jobs under a new IMF occupation, and say, “This way of settling differences is not just.”

A true revolution of values will see the human suffering and destruction of God’s creation being caused by economic policies designed to benefit the richest at the costs of the poorest and be moved to struggle to create a world in which all the world’s resources are respected and distributed in a way that all people can lead full and dignified lives.

It is time to let go of the strategies of war and economic violence and turn to strategies of peace and economic cooperation. While there is trouble in the land, a new spirit is moving over the

peoples of the earth. We join the millions of cries from around the world: “Another world is possible!”

As Dr. King told us, “We in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voices if our nation persists in its perverse ways.... We must be prepared to match words with actions by seeking out every creative means of protest possible.... Every one of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits their convictions, but we must all protest.”

Today, in the spirit of a true revolution of values, we lift up the cries of millions who oppose the war against Iraq and cry out again: “War is a defeat for humanity!” We lift up the cries of millions who campaign for a just economic order while honoring the billions of silent tears being shed by the victims of the current order/system and cry out: “Economic oppression is a defeat for humanity!”

We are called to spread the message of peace and justice that is at the heart of our faith traditions; to lift our voices in righteous indignation against this war that bombs the people of Iraq and the economic policies that will exclude them from participating in the banquet of life. We pledge to engage in actions of protest and public witness to help bring it to an end, and to be a prophetic voice in the struggles against military and economic domination.

Today we pledge to take up this challenge to do everything possible to end this war, to eradicate poverty, and preserve the integrity of creation - so that future generations may enjoy the promise of equality and justice that our Holy Scriptures call *Peace, Salaam, Shanti, Shalom*.

Religious Working Group on the World Bank/IMF: www.sndden.org/rwg