

IRAQ: JUSTICE AND WITHDRAWAL

Introduction

By Mike Phipps, Chair of the LRC Anti-War Commission

On Wednesday June 18th, the Labour Representation Committee Anti-war Commission organised a seminar in Parliament on Iraq, chaired by John McDonnell MP, the chair of the LRC. The aim of the seminar was to address what might be the essential conditions to allow the Iraqi people to regain full sovereignty over their country.

A consensus is growing across the political class that the invasion of Iraq was some kind of mistake. But it is far more than that. Since 2003, a million Iraqis have been killed, a million left disabled, half a million orphaned, three quarters of a million unable to resume primary school this year, five million made refugees. Political sectarianism, corruption and embezzlement have been institutionalised by the Occupation. Iraq's political and economic sovereignty has been destroyed and its historic cultural heritage jeopardised. An Amnesty International report earlier this year concluded: "Despite claims that the security situation has improved in recent months, the human rights situation is disastrous" with "a climate of impunity [and] the economy in tatters."

Last year, the Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research, whose board member Hans von Sponeck was formerly UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, issued an important paper on the future of Iraq. It observed: "The invasion and ongoing occupation is a political, intellectual and moral disaster. A withdrawal that leaves Iraq at its own fate without any war reparations, aid, opportunities for socio-political healing, etc. would be yet another." See http://www.transnational.org/Area_MiddleEast/2007/TFF_Iraq_Peace_Plan.html.

In his paper, Hans von Sponeck developed a ten-point plan for a just withdrawal from Iraq. Since then, and in the context of new initiatives internationally, the proposals are evolving. In the US, for example, Congressman Dennis Kucinich has developed a twelve-point peace plan for Iraq. Plans are in place for an international roundtable in Washington DC on these initiatives in the autumn.

In Britain, Iraq Occupation Focus hosted a conference on Justice for Iraq on July 19th in London, which itself adopted a five-point plan for a just withdrawal from Iraq, focusing on the need for immediate withdrawal of all troops, urgent action to address the humanitarian crisis, an end to foreign interference in Iraq's affairs – especially its oil industry, compensation and reparations for the invasion and earlier sanctions and prosecution for those responsible for war crimes, abuses and theft. Many of those who submitted papers to the LRC Seminar also participated in this conference. See www.iraqoccupationfocus.org.uk

The papers gathered here attempt to address these issues in more detail. Others will appear in due course. They are posted with the aim of inviting feedback prior to reconvening the LRC Seminar on Iraq before the end of 2008 to amend, finalise and promote a set of proposals.