



Campaña Estatal contra la Ocupación y por la Soberanía de Iraq

IRAQSOLIDARIDAD



Fifth Anniversary of the Illegal Invasion and Occupation of Iraq

Statement by the Spanish Campaign against the Occupation and for the Sovereignty of Iraq

For international recognition of the Iraqi resistance as the sole legitimate and legal representative of the Iraqi people

Translated by Ian Douglas

This March, the fifth anniversary of the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq — an occupation that stands defeated, unable to achieve its goals, and yet continues to rain violence down on the Iraqi people — will be commemorated with demonstrations in numerous cities around the globe. The war on Iraq continues with horrific brutality: the Pentagon acknowledges that it increased six fold air strikes in 2007. The number of Iraqis detained under US authority doubled in the last year. According to the Iraqi Association of Detainees and Prisoners, there are more than 400,000 Iraqis imprisoned and detained across 36 US and Iraqi detention centres, including thousands of women and children.

The US remains the primary occupying power in Iraq since the illegal invasion of 2003. In early 2007, President Bush ordered the deployment of a further 30,000 American soldiers, most of them in Baghdad. At present 158,000 American soldiers are in Iraq — an amount that US military commanders state cannot be reduced in the coming months — in addition to the troops of several other countries and tens of thousands of mercenaries operating beyond control or the rule of law. Officially, the United States acknowledges the deaths of almost 4,000 US soldiers in Iraq, 82 per cent of them in combat. After a reduction in the number of soldiers killed in combat in the final months of 2007, in January and February 2008 the United States has again lost, on average, over one soldier a day in the attacks of the Iraqi resistance.

According to data from the US Congress, the monthly cost of the war in Iraq stands at \$12 billion (more than eight billion euros), paid partly with Iraqi oil exports, which in January 2008 was estimated at 2.1 million barrels per day. So far, the US government has spent \$490 billion on the war in Iraq. However, according to a November 2007 report by the Joint Commission of Congress, the total economic cost estimate for 2002-2008 reaches \$1.3 trillion (nearly one trillion euros), a figure that includes items not usually taken into account, such as health spending on the 30,000 veterans that the Pentagon recognises as injured.

The balance sheet for the Iraqi people

In order to dominate Iraq, the occupation has dismantled Iraqi institutions and subjected Iraqi society to extreme violence and impoverishment, instigating ethnic and sectarian strife by promoting mafia-like entities run by criminals in collaboration

with the occupation and regimes neighbouring Iraq. Almost a quarter of the Iraqi population has died or become refugees after the onset of occupation and as a result of it.

After five years of occupation, all data from UN agencies and independent institutions corroborate that the daily situation of the Iraqi people is catastrophic:

— 43 per cent of Iraqis live in abject poverty on less than one dollar a day; 60-70 per cent of the workforce is unemployed. In Iraq there are more than six million people in need of urgent humanitarian aid, and of these, four million in urgent need of food aid — twice the number in 2004. Only 60 per cent of Iraqis have access to government food rations, whose coverage prior to the invasion was universal. Under pressure of the World Bank, the government in Iraq declared it would cancel the rations system in June, as well as subsidies on fuel.

— Child malnutrition has increased exponentially during the years of occupation: half of Iraq's children under five are malnourished; low birth weight has tripled to affect 11 per cent of Iraqi infants.

— 70 per cent of the population is denied adequate supplies of drinking water and 80 per cent lack basic sanitation; cholera is now ravaging half the country's 18 provinces.

— 2,000 Iraqi doctors have been killed — most of which assassinated — and half of the 34,000 registered in 2003 have left the country. Of Iraq's 180 large hospitals, 90 per cent lack essential resources. Under the control of Moqtada Al-Sadr, the Ministry of Health has plummeted into corruption, while hospitals have been transformed into secret detention centres where torture and murder are endemic at the hands of death squads.

— The combination of malnutrition and lack of drinking water, along with deteriorating sanitary conditions, places Iraq among 60 countries in the world with the highest rates of infant mortality, mortality in children under five, and maternal mortality.

— More than 800,000 schoolchildren (22 per cent) have stopped attending primary school and only half of those who complete primary school continue their education. More than 220,000 refugee children in neighbouring countries are denied their right to education.

— At least 300 teachers and professors from universities across Iraq, representing all academic disciplines, have been killed in a systematic campaign of assassinations. The militias of mercenary politicians tied to the occupation have imposed sectarianism within universities, as well as segregating the sexes and enforcing fundamentalist Islamic codes of dress.

— Across Iraq, including in Baghdad, the supply of electricity tops out at two hours a day. Absent centralised control over oil production, and in the face of massive plundering and corruption, Iraq has to import fuel for transportation and household use while local mafia forces make millions in smuggling.

— All public services have collapsed. Already in 2006, 40 per cent of skilled Iraqi personnel had left the country.

US propaganda about rebuilding the country is a bitter lie. The international community is silent about corruption in all fields and at all levels (Iraq is now the third worst country in the world in terms of corruption), the multiplication of local mafias, and the targeted assassination and / or disappearance of Iraq's technically skilled population. By August 2007, the government of Nuri Al-Maliki had spent only 4.4 per cent of the budget of that year. In January 2008, the export of Iraqi oil was estimated at 2.1 million barrels a day, half a million less per day than under the devastating sanctions regime that preceded the invasion.

One million Iraqis dead and five million Iraqi refugees and displaced

A new study published in January 2008 by the British company Opinion Business Research (ORB), in collaboration with the Independent Institute for Administration and Civil Society Studies (IIACSS), an independent Iraqi institution, estimated that over one million Iraqis have been killed since the beginning of the occupation, a figure 10 times higher than official figures. The new study confirms the assessment made by two previous studies conducted by the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University, USA, and published in the medical journal *The Lancet*, and that the occupiers and their allies have sought to discredit. All studies consider the actions of occupation forces as the main cause of violent death in Iraq, both in absolute and relative terms.

In addition to over one million dead, the US occupation of Iraq has created the largest and fastest growing global refugee crisis in post-World War II memory, inclusive of the Palestinian exodus and the genocide in Rwanda. In terms of numbers, Iraq is first in the world, and ahead of Colombia. At least 2.5 million Iraqis have been internally displaced — 2,000 per day — while 2.2 million more are refugees in neighbouring countries, particularly in Syria, representing a burden on host state resources that inevitably generates tension.

The causes of the exodus of the Iraqi population are overlapping: massive military operations of the occupation and the systematic destruction of infrastructure; the deterioration of basic living conditions due to the destruction of the state; rampant corruption and the strengthening of local mafias; and sectarian violence instigated from 2005 by the security services, militias and death squads linked to forces comprising the collaborating government in Iraq with the encouragement — or at least consent — of the occupation.

The presence of Al-Qaeda in Iraq is another consequence of the occupation, encouraging civil strife and social regression and is denounced the Iraqi anti-occupation movement. Indiscriminate attacks by Al-Qaeda, singled out by the media but minor in the context of the violence plaguing Iraq as a whole, have as a target the Iraqi people themselves and are used as justification for prolonging the occupation and the war.

The Iraqi Red Crescent has reported that the increase in US troops and intensification of the war — especially in Baghdad — through 2007 has doubled the number of displaced in that year compared to previous years, with 100,000 refugees created per month. The culmination of the sectarian logic embraced by the occupation is the construction by American troops of walls around whole neighbourhoods in Baghdad and elsewhere, along with wholesale terror campaigns

against districts and cities, including the citywide operation in Mosul in February 2008.

Destroying Iraqi society to end resistance

Interested in abetting the strategic destruction of Iraq, regimes of neighbouring countries (Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia...) have also encouraged sectarian violence in Iraq. But it is the occupying power that bears absolute and final responsibility for the violence that has racked the country, having imposed the old colonial model of power sharing by confessional quota, which inevitably generates sectarianism.

The US has taken advantage of the sectarian violence it instigated to destroy the social basis of resistance to the occupation and its project of annihilating secular and skilled sectors of the Iraqi population — those capable of managing a sovereign, unified, inclusive and democratic Iraq. The US continues to justify its presence in Iraq on the pretext of avoiding “civil war” and “combating terrorism”.

The destruction of institutions, widespread impoverishment and social disintegration fuel the expansion of backward and sectarian forces, which have resorted to terror to control and fragment the country. Meanwhile, new laws break the juridical unity of Iraq, discard the concept of citizenship, and place legislation under religion. The partition of Iraq emerges as inevitable, revealing the strategic goal of the extreme violence to which the country has been and remains subject.

After this is the control of oil. Regressive of civil and economic rights, the new Iraqi constitution — passed fraudulently in 2005 — anticipated the new Hydrocarbons Law, adopted in 2007 by the Iraqi government and pending ratification by parliament. Technical experts appointed by the US and UK, along with nine international oil companies, wrote this law, subsequently sanctioned by the IMF, all before arriving to the hands of the collaborators in the US-protected Green Zone. The Hydrocarbons Law confirms the destruction of the legal framework of the Iraqi state, sanctions the local management of resources that have not yet been exploited (78 per cent of all reserves, more than 111,000 million barrels) and opens the door to privatisation thanks to so-called Production Sharing Agreements for which already 70 international companies compete, including Spain's Repsol YPF.

In 2008, the American government and its feudal Iraqi collaborators aim to seal an agreement to replace the supposed legitimacy afforded to the occupation in contravention of state responsibilities under international law by the UN Security Council in 2004. This agreement, institutionalising a framework for bilateral relations, would be based on a document signed by the US president and his US-vetted Iraqi counterpart on 26 November 2007, which explicitly includes a commitment by the United States to guarantee security in Iraq — by way of permanent military bases — in exchange for benefits afforded to US companies investing in the country, particularly in the hydrocarbons sector.

But the sectarian logic that the Bush administration imposed from the very beginning of the occupation now stands for the US as a dilemma; whether or not to openly accept Iran as a partner in a forced agreement on Iraq. US attempts to normalise the occupation have depended on the promotion, in government and in the Iraqi parliament, of Shia religious forces allied with Iran. In 2007, the United States and Iran held three bilateral meetings on Iraq, the first direct meetings between them since the rupture of diplomatic relations in 1977 and in a moment of crisis over

Iran's nuclear programme. These meetings afforded Iran the rank of partner in the future of Iraq, a coup for the Iranian regime and a first step towards the recognition of its role as an emerging regional power. Dutifully, the Iranian regime was the first to recognise the collaborator institutions introduced by the occupiers, epitomised recently by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to Baghdad.

The commitment to the people of Iraq

There is nothing more opposed to the aspirations of the Iraqi people — who struggle in order to recover their sovereignty and to reconstruct democracy based on citizenship, civil rights, and the social management of Iraqi resources — than this logic of condominium between a defeated occupation, regimes neighbouring Iraq ready to share in the spoils of an illegal war, and the collaborating local oligarchy — corrupt, reactionary and criminal — that emerged with the invasion.

On the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, international solidarity should be explicit in its support of the popular, political and armed Iraqi resistance that strives not only to liberate Iraq from occupation and all forms of foreign domination, but also embodies the project to rebuild sovereign Iraqi democratic governance and social development of the state on non-sectarian lines.

In this regard, the Spanish Campaign Against the Occupation and for the Sovereignty of Iraq (CEOSI) expressed its solidarity with the positions of the Nationalist and Islamic Patriotic Front and its military wing, the High Command of Combat and Liberation of Iraq, established last October, while expressing support for the process of convergence and coordination between the various currents of the Iraqi resistance who share these principles.

CEOSI, along with organisations in the US and Europe comprising the International Anti-Occupation Network, believes it essential that the global antiwar movement promote international recognition of the Iraqi resistance as the sole legitimate and legal representative of the Iraqi people, as well as demanding the total and unconditional withdrawal of all occupation forces on the basis of direct negotiations between the resistance and the United States —the only way of making possible a reconstruction process integral to ending violence and the suffering of the Iraqi people.

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March 2008