



PRESS RELEASE: "Cambridge Human Rights group applauds Lib Dem Iraq policy"

FAO: NEWSDESK

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 18 Sept. 2000

Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq

CASI is a society at Cambridge University. Its committee members are students. CASI is exclusively concerned with the humanitarian consequences of sanctions on Iraq. It does not support Saddam Hussein's regime and is not opposed to military sanctions on Iraq.

A human rights group campaigning for the lifting of the non-military sanctions on Iraq has applauded the Liberal Democrats' recent policy statement.

Speaking at the Lib Dems annual conference, foreign policy spokesman Menzies Campbell affirmed his party's past support for military action against Iraq but added that "we owe it to ourselves, and to the suffering people of Iraq to keep our policy under review". He then called for Britain to lift the non-military sanctions on Iraq.

"This is wonderful news", announced Eleanor Coghill, spokeswoman for the Cambridge University group, Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq. "The Lib Dems are now the first major political party in the UK to recognise that a decade of harm to Iraqi civilians is more than enough."

Last year, Unicef estimated that an additional half million Iraqi children under the age of five have died under the sanctions, imposed in 1990. Other aspects of Iraqi life have also collapsed. The UN's last Humanitarian Co-ordinator in Iraq, who resigned in protest in February, is especially concerned about the consequences of depriving an entire generation of proper education. His predecessor resigned in 1998 to campaign against the non-military sanctions. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the world's largest human rights organisations, have also been outspokenly critical of the sanctions.

Increasingly governments around the world are condemning the sanctions. While they have long been unpopular in the Arab world, New Zealand, the European Parliament, Canada and France have attacked them this year as well. The United States is now almost isolated, with the exception of the UK, in its continued support for them.

"We hope that the Lib Dem's announcement, and the growing international consensus, will cause Labour to re-evaluate its own appallingly inadequate position on the sanctions", added Coghill. Earlier this month, the Labour Party released its own pre-manifesto statement. Without mention of Iraq, it promised to "make economic sanctions less harsh on people and more effective in penalising delinquent rulers". It did not mention how it would do this.

- 30 -

Campbell text: <http://www.libdems.org.uk/index.cfm?page=news§ion=conference&article=517>

Unicef estimate: <http://www.unicef.org/newsline/99pr29.htm>

Education: <http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2000/20000301.vonsponeck.doc.html>

Amnesty International: <http://www.cam.ac.uk/societies/casi/info/aiuk-agm.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2000/08/iraq0804.htm>

Labour statement: <http://www.labour.org.uk/lp/new/labour/docs/NPFDOCUMENTS2000/163-196.PDF>

Contact: Colin Rowat : tel.07768 056 984
info@casi.org.uk, <http://www.casi.org.uk>