

NATIONAL PETITION AGAINST SANCTIONS ON IRAQ

Prime Minister,

We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned at the humanitarian crisis being caused in Iraq by economic sanctions. Sanctions have plunged ordinary people into misery while leaving the leaders of Iraq untouched. As you know, a Humanitarian Panel of experts commissioned by the UN Security Council to assess the situation in Iraq reported in March 1999 that 'the country has experienced a shift from relative affluence to **massive poverty**' during sanctions. The Panel found that **child mortality had more than tripled** and that 'infant mortality rates in Iraq are **among the highest in the world**'. UNICEF reports that **a quarter of Iraqi children under five are chronically malnourished**. The Humanitarian Panel concluded that the 'oil-for-food' relief programme alone could **never** meet the humanitarian needs of the people of Iraq.

British policy makes the health and survival of Iraq's children conditional on a solution of the inspection crisis. This must stop. **We call on you to seek the immediate and unconditional lifting of all non-military sanctions on Iraq.**

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16 Iraqi children die from sanctions every 3 hours (please see overleaf for details) .

Please return by 6th November 1999 to 'National Petition Against Sanctions on Iraq', 12 Trinity Road, London N2 8JJ. The *National Petition* is supported by the British Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation, Cambridge Campaign for Peace, Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq, Institute for Independence Studies, Leicester CND, *New Internationalist* magazine, Sheffield Committee Against War in the Gulf, Socialist Democracy, United Nations Association (UK), Voices in the Wilderness UK, and Wokingham Peace Group. For more copies of the petition or for information about anti-sanctions campaigning, please contact us by post, phone 0181 444 1605, e-mail: iraqpetition@email.com or via the Web: <http://go.to/iraqpetition>

The Human Cost of Economic Sanctions on Iraq

'We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that. It is illegal and immoral.'

Denis Halliday, former UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, resigning in Oct. 1998

When were sanctions imposed, and why?

The economic sanctions were levied nine years ago, on 6 August 1990, to force Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. After Iraq left Kuwait in February 1991, the sanctions were re-imposed by the UN Security Council in order to disarm Iraq of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, and long-range missiles.

Are sanctions really hurting ordinary people in Iraq?

The most careful independent study of child deaths in Iraq due to sanctions, by Columbia University epidemiologist Richard Garfield of the US, found a massive increase in the death rate of children under five due to economic sanctions. This accounted for 'between a minimum of 100,000 and a more likely estimate of **227,000 excess deaths among young children** from August 1991 through March 1998.'*(Morbidity and Mortality Among Iraqi Children from 1990 Through 1998, March 1999)* **130 children under five die every day.** (Jan-March 1998 figures - the most recent data).

A Humanitarian Panel set up by the Security Council reported in March 1999 (www.un.org/Depts/oip/panelrep.htm):

'The data provided to the panel point to a continuing degradation of the Iraqi economy with an acute deterioration in the living conditions of the Iraqi population and severe strains on its social fabric. As summarized by the UNDP field office, **"the country has experienced a shift from relative affluence to massive poverty"**. In marked contrast to the prevailing situation prior to the events of 1990-91, the **infant mortality rates in Iraq today are among the highest in the world**, low infant birth weight affects at least 23% of all births, **chronic malnutrition affects every fourth child under five years of age**, only 41% of the population have regular access to clean water, 83% of all schools need substantial repairs. The [Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies] states that the Iraqi health-care system is today in a decrepit state.'

'Chronic malnutrition' can lead to permanent physical and mental stunting. **Over 700,000 children in Iraq are chronically malnourished as a result of the sanctions.**

Isn't there a UN relief programme for Iraq?

The 'oil-for-food' programme allows Iraq to sell \$5.2bn worth of oil every six months, of which 66% is available to buy humanitarian supplies. However, malnutrition is caused by poor drinking water as much as by a lack of food and medicines, and the funds needed to repair the civilian infrastructure are unfortunately far beyond the scope of oil-for-food.

The Humanitarian Panel concluded that oil-for-food could not solve the humanitarian crisis: 'Regardless of the improvements that might be brought about in the implementation of [oil-for-food] - in terms of approval procedures, better performance by the Iraqi Government, or funding levels - the magnitude of the humanitarian needs is such that they cannot be met' by the programme.

Isn't the British government trying to help?

The British government is proposing a plan at the UN Security Council which prioritises disarmament over meeting the needs of Iraq's children. They propose temporarily suspending the embargo on Iraqi exports if Iraq co-operates with a new inspection agency - once inspections have been going for some months.

The July '99 proposals put forward by the British government are a weak form of the recommendations of the UN Humanitarian Panel - crucially, the Panel did not make their proposals conditional on progress regarding disarmament. The Panel said, of its own recommendations, that they **'may lead to incremental improvements'** in the humanitarian situation. **Much too little, much too late.**

What about the disarmament of Iraq?

Economic sanctions must end because the needs of ordinary Iraqis, and of Iraqi children in particular, cannot be met while those sanctions continue. Basic rights to food, clean drinking water, and health care must be restored, unconditionally. **Seeking disarmament by starving the children of Iraq, as Britain currently does, is deeply immoral.**

FOR MORE COPIES of this petition, or for details of anti-sanctions groups, please contact *National Petition*, 12 Trinity Rd, London, N2 8JJ. Telephone (0181) 444 1605. E-mail: iraqpetition@email.com Website: <http://go.to/iraqpetition>

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