

Twelve actions for twelve years of sanctions on Iraq

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On 6 August 1990, the United Nations imposed comprehensive sanctions on Iraq in response to its invasion of Kuwait. The Gulf War followed, after which sanctions were reaffirmed by the terms of the ceasefire, and linked to weapons inspections and disarmament. Since then, economic sanctions have been largely responsible for a humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq.

In 1999, a UNICEF report stated that sanctions had contributed to the deaths of half a million Iraqi children. Today, twelve years after their imposition, the burden of sanctions remains immense. The 'oil for food' programme has provided limited humanitarian relief, but it has not been an adequate substitute for normal economic activity.

Iraq needs income to repair its shattered infrastructure; restrictions on foreign investment, foreign exchange and exports other than oil continue to prevent this reconstruction.

CASI

campaign against sanctions on Iraq

1 - Write to your MP

Below are two possible topics for letters to your MP, including points to make and questions you might like to ask about the Government's sanctions policy. You can also ask your MP to forward your concerns to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

Letters to MPs inform them of the strength of public concern over a given issue. For every letter they receive on a specific topic, MPs know there are a significant number of other people who share the opinion. As few as five or six letters on the same subject are often enough to persuade an MP to take an issue seriously.

- If you need to **find out who your MP is**, you can do so at your local library or town hall, or by phoning 020 7219 4272 and giving your post-code. If you have internet access, you can look your MP up at www.locata.co.uk/commons.

- You can send letters to your MP at:

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

- You can also send a fax to your MP at www.faxyourmp.com.

LETTER A

'Smart Sanctions' - Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1409

* Welcome the resolution as a recognition of the need for measures to be taken to alleviate humanitarian suffering in Iraq, but express disappointment that after a year of negotiations so little has been done to address the needs of the Iraqi people, especially with respect to income.

* Express hope that the Goods Review List will not be used to prevent the import into Iraq of items necessary for rebuilding the country's infrastructure.

* Question why the resolution does not allow foreign investment in Iraq and does not allow Iraq to export goods other than oil, steps necessary for the reflation and diversification of the Iraqi economy.

* Note that the 'oil for food' programme is not a long term solution and that on 2 March 2001 the United Nations Secretary General said that "the programme was never meant to meet all the needs of the Iraqi people and cannot be a substitute for normal economic activity in Iraq." Question how the needs of the Iraqi people will be met in the long term.

(More information on SCR 1409 can be found in CASI's July newsletter.)

LETTER B

Conditions for lifting/suspending sanctions

* In February 2002 US Secretary of State Colin Powell said "Sanctions and the pressure of sanctions are part of a strategy of regime change". Ask whether the British government agrees with this statement.

* Question whether Iraq is being given enough incentive to allow weapons inspections. Statements such as that of Colin Powell above indicate that even if Iraq cooperates fully with weapons inspections sanctions will not be lifted.

* SCR 1284 states that if Iraq cooperates with weapons inspections for 120 days then sanctions will be suspended "subject to the elaboration of effective financial and other operational measures to ensure that Iraq does not acquire prohibited items". The nature of these measures has never been elaborated. Ask the government what they would be.

You will probably receive in return from your MP a letter toeing the party line. If they do contact the FCO on your behalf, the response they pass on to you will probably be based on a standard letter setting out government policy. Replying to this letter with counter arguments will let your MP know that you did not accept the government line and may also be informative for her/him. Ask them what their own opinion is, rather than that of their party. If you would like help responding to any points raised in a reply please contact CASI.

2 - Meet with your MP

You may decide that the easiest way to find out what your MP really thinks is to speak to them face to face. In this case, you could go along to one of their regular **surgeries** to question them directly. Most MPs hold these sessions, at which they are available in different places within their constituency for constituents to meet and discuss problems with them. Details are usually advertised in local papers and in such places as public libraries. Your MP's local party office will also be able to tell you the next surgery date.

It is worth bearing in mind at these sessions that your MP will probably be well practised at evading the question and setting the terms of the discussion. Don't let them. Stick to simple, direct questions about sanctions as you see them and it should be possible both to find out your MP's opinion and, if it differs from yours, to get your point across. After the meeting, you might write to your MP to thank them for their time and to make it clear that this issue remains highly significant for you.

3 - Join or form a group

If public opinion were firmly against the economic sanctions it would be almost impossible for the government to maintain its support for them. The great majority of people would probably be against sanctions if they had a full knowledge of the situation. One way to spread news of what is happening in Iraq as widely as possible is to **get involved in a local group**. CASI can send you details of campaigning groups and related charities in your area.

If there is no group near to you campaigning on Iraq and you wish to take a more active role then you might decide to **form a group** yourself. The easiest way to form a group is to draw in those whom you already know, with whom you may have talked the matter over and who have similar ideas to you. From there you can consider a few points which from the outset it is useful for you all to be clear about:

- **what** your group does and exactly what it stands for
- the level of commitment: **how much** time you all want to put in
- **who** does what within the group: it is crucial to avoid too much concentration of workload or responsibility on any individual
- **when** and **where** you are going to have meetings

4 - Write a leaflet

A useful resource to have is a general leaflet explaining who you are and what you stand for. This can then be distributed at stalls, vigils and meetings to anyone who wants to know more.

A few points to consider are:

- **Keep your arguments clear:** expect your audience to have no prior knowledge of the situation, and consist of individuals from a variety of backgrounds with a broad range of ideas and opinions.
- **Keep it short and to the point:** most people will not want to spend much time reading the leaflet, so concentrate on a few memorable points such as Unicef's figure of half a million child deaths.
- **Spend some time on the design:** make the leaflet easy on the eye by including a graphic or using different font sizes and styles.
- **Give contact details:** include a section on how to find out more or get further involved, for example by giving contact details for your group or referring people to a useful website.

5 - Hold a stall or vigil

Holding a regular stall or vigil is a good way of getting the message across, and can be done as a group or as an individual.

To be effective, a **stall** should be eye-catching and in a central location. You could consider making a banner with a short, sharp message on it to hang over the front of your stall or to use as a backdrop. You can then distribute information documents such as leaflets, newsletters and briefings to members of the public, as well as meet with and talk to them. You must be ready to argue with and convince people with widely different opinions and levels of knowledge on the issue. It may also be beneficial to have something for people you have convinced to do, such as signing a petition or postcard, or giving their contact details to receive further information.

One particularly effective way of getting noticed is to hold a silent **vigil** in the centre of town. You could make banners or placards stating who you are and why you're there, and you could also consider ways to make the appearance of the vigil more striking, such as having everyone wearing black or holding candles. You can then have a number of people close by handing out leaflets and talking to people about the sanctions.

6 - Arrange a speaker meeting

One of the best ways to raise awareness about the sanctions is to hold a meeting with a **visiting speaker**. Speaker meetings will often attract more people than planning meetings, and an inspiring talk can be both a good way in for people new to the issue and an interesting stimulus for the more knowledgeable members of the audience.

It is important that you **publicise** the event widely and well in advance to ensure that as many people as possible who might be interested in coming hear about it. Posters, adverts and a website can all be useful tools for achieving this.

Potential speakers might include:

- someone who has recently visited Iraq
- a member of the Iraqi community
- a politician particularly interested in the situation in Iraq
- a member of another anti-sanctions group
- a journalist who has covered Iraq

If you would like any help finding a speaker, please contact CASI.

7 - Call for a humanitarian assessment

Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1302, passed in June 2000, called for the UN Secretary-General to **“appoint independent experts to prepare by 26 November 2000 a comprehensive report and analysis of the humanitarian situation in Iraq, including the current humanitarian needs arising from that situation and recommendations to meet those needs, within the framework of the existing resolutions”**.

The Iraqi government, perhaps reflecting fears that an independent assessment would reveal its failure to make use of all opportunities available to it, would not give visas to the experts who would have carried out the analysis. Yet the UN made little attempt to pursue the matter, with the Secretary-General only appointing former Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg to head the mission on 30 October 2000, less than a month before the report was due.

Two years on, no assessment has yet taken place. Politics appear to have taken priority over humanitarian needs.

LETTER C

Please write to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, USA.

- * Express your concern that the “comprehensive report and analysis of the humanitarian situation” called for by paragraph 18 of SCR 1302 has not been produced.
- * Point out that the previous Humanitarian Panel Report commissioned by the Security Council in 1999 identified severe suffering associated with sanctions, and succeeded in identifying areas for much-needed reform of the sanctions regime.
- * Express your concern that the latest reform to sanctions, in SCR 1409 (so called ‘smart sanctions’) did not rest on any such assessment of the needs of the Iraqi people.
- * State the injustice of a needs assessment of the Iraqi people being impeded by political wrangling over which they have no influence.
- * Call on the Secretary-General to ensure that the humanitarian assessment is completed, as was mandated in SCR 1302. This should happen whether or not the experts can enter Iraq, as there are plenty of UN personnel in Iraq to assist with information.

8 - Write to a newspaper

Letters to newspapers demonstrate the level of public interest in a topic and are informative for readers and possibly journalists. Even letters that are not printed will still be read by newspaper staff.

* Write a letter to your **local paper** drawing attention to the continuing imposition of sanctions. You could stress that while political debate is concentrated on US and UK military action against the Iraqi regime, there remain significant concerns about the impact of sanctions on the Iraqi people. You could mention one or two of the points listed in the suggestions for letters to MPs in Action 1.

It's a good idea to try to find a local angle for your letter. While some papers may print letters on general topics, especially midweek, a reference to a local military base, or to an event organised by a local anti-sanctions group, may improve the chances of your letter being published.

* Keep an eye out also for articles about Iraq in the **national press**. If you see any inaccuracies, or if you want to agree or disagree with a point made in an article, you could write a letter to the editor in response.

Take into account that national newspapers receive hundreds of letters every day and can publish only a selection. Some points to consider when writing a letter include:

- **make your points clearly**: don't try to cover too much ground, but instead, focus on one or two key points which you'd like to communicate to the reader, and which are most relevant to the original article.
- **back up your claims**: make reference to statements by UN agencies and NGOs that support your argument.
- **be concise**: bear in mind that anything over 200 words probably won't get published.
- **include all your details**: give your name, full address and telephone number.
- **send it off quickly**: national newspapers are increasingly printing responses only to the previous day's articles. As a result, it's best to send a letter before 3pm on the day of the article's publication, or even better, on the same morning.

One way to keep in touch with what is printed in the national press, if you have access to email, is to join CASI's **discussion list**. List members from Voices in the Wilderness UK often send out a compilation of broadsheet coverage for the day on the same morning, allowing you time to get your replies in quickly. To subscribe to the list, email lists-manager@casi.org.uk or go to www.casi.org.uk/lists.html.

9 - Invest (symbolically) in Iraq

One of the main reasons that Iraq's humanitarian situation is so dire is that Iraq is now poor. According to the Office of the Iraq Programme's most recent weekly update on 30 July 2002, almost \$36 billion worth of imports to Iraq have been approved by the UN under the 'oil for food' programme, of which \$23.6 billion have arrived. These apparently impressive figures, however, mean that only about £2.50 worth of goods have arrived per Iraqi per week since the programme began in December 1996. Without significant economic growth in Iraq, these figures will not improve much. They are not enough to rebuild a war-torn country.

Revenue crisis

Iraq's oil revenues have actually fallen this year, due largely to a political struggle between the Iraqi, American and British governments. This has cost the 'oil for food programme' some \$2.4 billion, according to the Executive Director of the Office of the Iraq Programme, Benon Sevan, in May. This translates into a cost of some \$1.7 billion to the humanitarian programme, which receives 72% of Iraq's oil revenues. A revenue crisis has been the result. As of 30 July 2002, there are more than \$2.08 billion worth of humanitarian supply contracts which have been approved by the United Nations, but cannot be paid for.

New sources of income must be found to address Iraq's ongoing humanitarian crisis. This was recognised in France's draft Security Council Resolution (SCR) last year, which would have allowed "civilian investments in Iraq by foreign companies ... subject to appropriate arrangements to be approved by the Council". Unfortunately, this clause, which would have allowed the possibility of significant economic improvement, was rejected by the US. Its favoured draft, which eventually became SCR 1409, did not provide for any new sources of income - a stunning failure in a resolution that took over a year to negotiate.

Security Council Resolution 778

In 1992, there was also revenue crisis. The previous year, the Security Council had presented a version of 'oil for food' to the Iraqi government which would have allowed Iraq limited oil sales of \$1.6 billion, with 30% of this being deducted for war reparations. A UN escrow account to hold the revenue from these oil sales was also set up.

With even the UN Secretary-General recommending that at least \$2 billion in oil revenue be made available for purely for humanitarian needs, the Iraqi government rejected the proposal. This left the Council without

money in its escrow account for Gulf War reparations or UN weapons inspectors, and Iraq without income to meet its humanitarian needs.

Therefore, on 2 October 1992, the Security Council passed resolution 778 in which it "Urges all States to contribute funds from other sources to the escrow account as soon as possible". Once sanctions were lifted, the funds deposited in the escrow account "together with applicable interest" would be returned "to the accounts or States from which funds had been provided". Despite the eventual agreement of an 'oil for food' programme in 1996, this appeal still stands.

Iraqis face difficult months ahead as inability to pay for supplies reduces vital humanitarian imports. On top of this, many Iraqis are worried about their futures: there are signs of deepening unease in Iraq, as all know that a new war may be imminent.

Invest in Iraq!

The people of Iraq continue to need income. Whilst the Security Council persists in preventing foreign investment in Iraq, the only way Iraqis can receive income is through the 'oil for food' programme.

LETTER D

* Send "funds from other sources" to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office now with a letter stating that you are doing so "pursuant to paragraph three of Security Council resolution 778 (1992)".

* Tell the FCO that you are investing in Iraq, and in its future, and ask them to do so as well by proposing a new Security Council resolution supporting foreign investment in Iraq, as last year's French draft did.

* Stress that you are aware that your small contribution is not, in itself, a solution, but that the urgency of finding new sources of revenue cannot be ignored simply because of the threat of war. Tell them that your donation is symbolic of your decision to stand with the Iraqi people in the difficult months ahead.

Send your contribution to:

Middle East Desk,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office,
King Charles St,
London, SW1A 2AH,
UK.

10 - Donate to a charity working in Iraq

CARE International UK (Registered Charity No. 292506)

Works with local communities in 64 countries to end poverty through disaster relief and sustainable development programmes. Currently distributes food to children in Iraqi hospitals and refurbishes and maintains water systems throughout central and southern Iraq. Over two million people directly benefit from their refurbishment of water plants and pumping stations.

10-13 Rushworth St
London tel 020 7934 9334
SE1 0RB fax 020 7934 9335 www.careinternational.org.uk

Help the Needy (Registered Charity No. 1059951)

Launched in 1992, it focuses on relief work in Iraq. Supports and supervises a number of projects in the North, South and Centre, including sponsoring orphans, students, and poor families, and distributing food and clothing. Also funds medical supplies and treatment for long-term diseases such as heart problems and diabetes. Managed by volunteers.

PO Box 6074
Birmingham tel 0800 02 73 110
B10 0TR fax 020 8961 1861 htnuk@yahoo.co.uk

Human Relief Foundation (Registered Charity No. 1043676)

Established in 1991, it has over ten years of experience of relief distribution, management and development in all parts of Iraq. In 2001 raised over £1 million for relief work in Iraq and other countries affected by conflicts and natural disasters. Work in Iraq includes renovating damaged schools, rebuilding community centres and developing a project to improve domestic water supplies and sanitation.

Suite 200
The Aberdeen House
22-24 Highbury Grove
London tel 01274 392727
N5 2EA fax 01274 739992 www.hrf.co.uk

Medical Aid for Iraqi Children (Registered Charity No. 1044222)

Registered in 1995, it concentrates on donating medicines, including specialised anti-cancer drugs, and medical equipment, such as ventilators and radiometers, to paediatric hospitals in Iraq. To date it has delivered 18 shipments to the value of £1.75 million to 23 hospitals across Iraq, many of them on a regular basis.

Medical Aid for Iraqi Children

26 Old Brompton Rd

London

SW7 3DL

tel. 020 7581 2727

fax. 020 7581 2767 www.maic.org.uk

Save the Children UK (Registered Charity No. 213890)

Works in 70 countries to help children in the world's most impoverished communities. Lobbies the international community about the harmful effect on children of general economic sanctions and other forms of international intervention. Its work in Northern Iraq covers all aspects of child protection, with a strong emphasis on building the capacity of national NGOs and the Kurdish administration to implement this programme.

Public Enquiry Team

Save the Children

17 Grove Lane

London

SE5 8RD

tel. 020 7703 5400

fax. 020 7703 2278

www.savethechildren.org.uk

11 - Inform one other person

Each month, make it your task properly to inform at least one person of the humanitarian effects of economic sanctions on Iraq, and the case against their continued imposition. If everyone who receives this booklet convinces one person, there will be several hundred more people supporting the lifting of sanctions by the end of every month!

12 - Keep yourself informed

The best aid to campaigning against economic sanctions on Iraq is to keep yourself informed - read newspaper articles on Iraq, watch television news bulletins, listen to radio reports. The more detailed your knowledge about economic sanctions and their context, the more convincing will be your arguments for their removal. Simply to have read the details of the Security Council Resolutions on Iraq over the last twelve years is probably to know more than most journalists, politicians and members of the public.

If you have access to the internet, you might also find the CASI website, available at www.casi.org.uk, to be a useful resource. It contains all the latest information on Iraq, as well as links to a vast array of documentation from a range of sources, including statements and reports by UN organs, agencies and commissions, other intergovernmental institutions, governments, non-governmental institutions and religious bodies. It also contains an archive of CASI's newsletters and briefings, and of messages to the CASI email discussion list.

Coming soon on the CASI website...

Has it really come to this?

What you need to know about sanctions on Iraq 1990-2002

weapons of mass destruction
no-fly zones
the 'oil for food' programme
UN reports
weapons inspections
'smart sanctions'

CASI's Guide to Sanctions not enough?

Look out for our new '24 hours of reading' list, getting you quickly up to speed on twelve years of economic sanctions

The **Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq** (CASI) is a registered society at the University of Cambridge. Its committee members are all volunteers; it is co-ordinated by 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.

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