

Statements from Religious Leaders about Iraq

Catholic

We respectfully urge you to step back from the brink of war and help lead the world to act together to fashion an effective global response to Iraq's threats that conforms with traditional moral limits on the use of military force. **US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Letter to President Bush, Sept. 13, 2002**

Episcopalian

The question for us now must be: what is our role in the community of nations? I believe we have the capacity within us to help lead our world into the way of justness and peace. The freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the United States oblige us to attend not only to our own welfare, but to the well-being of the world around us. A superpower, especially one that declares itself to be "under God," must exercise the role of super servant. Our nation has an opportunity to reflect the values and ideals that we espouse by focusing upon issues of poverty, disease and despair, not only within our own nation but throughout the global community of which we are a part. **The Presiding Bishop's statement on military action against Iraq, September 6, 2002**

Jewish

International cooperation is far, far better than unilateral action, and the U.S. must explore all reasonable means of attaining such support. Non-military action is always preferable to military action, and the U.S. must fully explore all options to resolve the situation through such means. If the effort to obtain international cooperation and support through the United Nations fails, the U.S. must work with other nations to obtain cooperation in any military action. **Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Executive Committee Decision on Unilateral Action by the U.S. Against Iraq**

Lutheran

While we are fully aware of the potential threat posed by the government of Iraq and its leader, I believe it is wrong for the United States to seek to over-throw the regime of Saddam Hussein with military action. Morally, I oppose it because I know a war with Iraq will have great consequences for the people of Iraq, who have already suffered through years of war and economic sanctions. Further, I believe it is detrimental to U.S. interests to take unilateral military action when there is strong international support for weapons inspections, and when most other governments oppose military action. I also believe that U.S. military action at this time will further destabilize the region. I call upon members of our congregations to be fervent in prayer, engaged in conversation with one another and with our leaders. In the final analysis, we must stand unequivocally for peace. .

ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson's Statement on Iraq Situation, August 30, 2002

Mennonite

*To speak against war and invasion is to hold up a conviction that, in light of all uncertainties, peace and security are enlarged when authorities choose the path of non-violent diplomacy. The concerns noted above convince us that this is both a moral and a practical path. Our call is also a statement of belief that God wills the path of peace and will work alongside those who have the courage to take risks for peace. **Statement of the Mennonite Central Committee, April 20, 2002***

Methodist

United Methodists have a particular duty to speak out against an unprovoked attack. President Bush and Vice-President Cheney are members of our denomination. Our silence now could be interpreted as tacit approval of war. Christ came to break old cycles of revenge and violence. Too often, we have said we worship and follow Jesus but have failed to change our ways. Jesus proved on the cross the failure of state-sponsored revenge. It is inconceivable that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior and the Prince of Peace, would support this proposed attack.

Secretary Jim Winkler of The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society, August 30, 2002

Presbyterian

We urge Presbyterians to oppose a precipitate U.S. attack on Iraq and the Bush administration's new doctrine of pre-emptive military action. We call

upon President George W. Bush and other leaders to: Refrain from language that seems to label certain individuals and nations as 'evil' and others as 'good'; Oppose ethnic and religious stereotyping, Guard against a unilateralism, rooted in our unique position of political, economic and military power, that perpetuates the perception that 'might makes right'; Allow United Nations weapons inspections in Iraq, without undue pressure or threats of pre-emptive, unilateral action; and End the economic sanctions against Iraq, which have been ineffectual but have done untold damage to the Iraqi people. **The General Assembly Council and the staff leadership team of the Presbyterian Church (USA), September 28, 2002**

Quaker (Society of Friends)

We call upon Friends to witness and work to prevent this war, to reverse this new military doctrine, to call upon our governments to implement multilateral, diplomatic responses to the threats posed by the government of Iraq, and to continue developing positive, nonviolent approaches to resolving international conflicts. We know that there are millions of people of good will with whom we can join in this work. **Joint Statement in Response to Threat of War with Iraq from the General and Executive Secretaries of Five Quaker Organizations, September 24, 2002**

Unitarian Universalist

We will not all stand in the same place on this issue. But we can all stand in the same faith. Above all, that is my hope. In these troubling days and all those that lie ahead, my deepest prayer is that we stand in this faith with Universalist Olympia Brown, who wrote, over one hundred years ago, "Every nation must learn that the people of all nations are children of God, and must share the wealth of the world. You may say this is impracticable, far away, can never be accomplished, but it is the work we are appointed to do." **Responding to the Threat of War: A Pastoral Letter from the Rev. William G. Sinkford, President, Unitarian Universalist Association, September 20, 2002**

United Church of Christ

With heavy hearts we hear once again the drumbeat of war against Iraq. As leaders committed to God's reign of justice and peace in the world and to the just conduct of our nation, we firmly oppose this advance to war. While Iraq's weapons potential is uncertain, the death that would be inflicted on all sides in a war is certain. Striking against Iraq now will not serve to prevent terrorism or defend our nation's interests. We fear that

war would only provoke greater regional instability and lead to the mass destruction it is intended to prevent. UCC leaders, September 13, 2002

Ecumenical

As Christians, we are concerned by the likely human costs of war with Iraq, particularly for civilians. We are unconvinced that the gain for humanity would be proportionate to the loss. Neither are we convinced that it has been publicly demonstrated that all reasonable alternative means of containing Iraq's development of weapons of mass destruction have been exhausted. We call upon our governments to pursue these diplomatic means in active cooperation with the United Nations and to stop the apparent rush to war. World Council of Churches, August 30, 2002

We are compelled by the prophetic vision of peace to speak a word of caution to our governments and our people. We represent a diversity of Christian communities - from the just war traditions to the pacifist tradition. As leaders of these communities in the United States and the United Kingdom, it is our considered judgment that a preemptive war against Iraq, particularly in the current situation, would not be justified. Statement from Religious Leaders, October 11, 2002

Feel free to reproduce this flyer or to enlarge to poster size. Please encourage others to speak out to friends and co-workers, to elected officials, in the media, in protests and vigils, and in other ways help reverse the rush to war. The democratic process did not end with the vote in Congress. We the people can stop this war by listening to, educating, and activating others. For more information please contact Lutheran Peace Fellowship, 1710 11th Ave., Seattle, WA 98122, 206-720-0313, lpf@ecunet.org www.LutheranPeace.org

Lutheran (ELCA)

In recent days, leaders of the United States government have talked openly about the possibility of a pre-emptive strike against the government of Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein. As presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), I am deeply concerned about any such action. In the 1995 ELCA social statement, "For Peace in God's World," we said that, as Christians, "the love of our neighbor obligates us to act to prevent wars and seek alternatives to them." This is a time to stop the use of hostile rhetoric and verbal threats, and to focus again on diplomacy. ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson's Statement on Iraq Situation, August 30, 2002

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economic sanctions. Further, I believe it is detrimental to U.S. interests to take unilateral military action when there is strong international support for weapons inspections, and when most other governments oppose military action. I also believe that U.S. military action at this time will further destabilize the region. I call upon members of our congregations to be fervent in prayer, engaged in conversation with one another and with our leaders. In the final analysis, we must stand unequivocally for peace. .
ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson's Statement on Iraq Situation,
August 30, 2002

"We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we do about peace; more about killing than we do about living"

Omar Bradley