

Geneva Civil Society Summit

Accountability & Justice

for IRAQ

The 10th Commemoration of US- led Invasion & Occupation – March 2013

Organisers:

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), The Perdana Global Peace Foundation, Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War, The International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), Union of Arab Jurists, International Educational Development, INC, BRussells Tribunal, International Anti-Occupation Network (IAON), Arab Lawyers Association- UK, The Iraqi Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), Spanish Campaign against the Occupation and for Iraq Sovereignty- CEOSI, Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, Women Solidarity for an Independent and United Iraq

Accountability and justice for Iraq

INTRODUCTION

March 2013 marks a decade since the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. Yet justice for the people of Iraq, victims of the invasion and of the violence that spread all over Iraq, remains an unlikely prospect. To help achieve this overdue obligation, civil society organizations and human rights defenders, with the support of several academic and research institutions, are planning an international conference titled “Geneva Civil Society Summit - Accountability and Justice for Iraq” to be held in Geneva from 14 to 15 March 2013, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq, and to set out actions and measures towards accountability and achieving justice for the Iraqi people. It is well past time for the United Nations and the concerned international agencies to confront the apparent impunity granted to those who have committed crimes against a sovereign, independent, and founding UN Member-State. Given the prolonged suffering, it is important now more than ever to restore justice and hold those responsible accountable.

BACKGROUND

The ten-year period leading up to March 2013 was marked by many, deliberate, unnecessary and extreme forms of damage and destruction that have permanently devastated the nation and its people. The US invasion and occupation of Iraq has produced a vast number of consequences, many of which have and will continue to directly and indirectly affect the most vulnerable of the population: innocent civilians, women and children.

Moreover, it has resulted in numerous far-reaching consequences world-wide. As Desmond Tutu said, the immorality of the United States and Great Britain’s decision to invade Iraq in 2003, premised on the lie that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, has destabilized and polarized the world to a greater extent than any other conflict in history.

All necessary means to sustain modern life were largely destroyed, looted, or burned down in defiance of the Geneva Conventions. The hallmarks of Iraq’s society that have been destroyed is not limited to the advanced medical and educational facilities but also museums, public libraries, social and recreational facilities, power and water plants, factories, roads, bridges, radio and television stations and irrigation systems.

This was a US-engineered rampage, and an invasion that the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan denounced as an “illegal act” from which “painful lessons” must be learned.

The Invasion has resulted in atrocities and systematic war crimes, contributing to more than one million estimated deaths. Even that could be an under-estimate. The American stance as articulated by Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt was that it was: “not productive” to count Iraq’s enormous death toll. This to be added the million and a half Iraqis who are believed to have been perished as a result of the draconian embargo 1990-2003.

These violations including for example, the horrors of Abu Ghraib and other detention centers have barely been addressed with perpetrators near exempt from justice.

How long will the “International Community” continue to ignore the near unique plight of Iraq and its people?

In addition to the destruction and the human death toll, there are now approximately 4 million Iraqi children who are orphans, 3 million widows, 2 million internally displaced persons and 3 million refugees.

Notwithstanding, the regular forces of the occupying power, have been withdrawn from Iraq without giving any form of apology to the people of Iraq for the severe violations of International Humanitarian Law committed during their occupation and control of the country. The Iraqi people now live in the direst of conditions. In one of the world’s potentially wealthiest countries, Iraqis living atop of the second largest oil reserves on earth, now reside in a near failed State, under an arguably US-imposed system, rife with corruption and brutality.

Arguably, illegal measures were taken by the occupying authorities in order to gain immunity from prosecution for their troops. Mercenaries and private military companies were also exempted from prosecution. These exemptions all constitute grave breaches of International, Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. Further, International Law stipulates that the United States and its allies must bear legal responsibility for wrong doings, crimes and violations. One must ask who is benefitting from the continued silence. Who are the war criminals that are responsible at all levels?

While, it will emphasize the demand of the people of the world that no perpetrator is left without punishment no matter who he is, the Summit will be a unique occasion to re-affirm, at the UN, the fundamental position that launching war is a crime. As emphasized by Ton Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia’s fourth Prime Minister, “leaders of governments must not use war as a means to settle disputes. This must be a public policy. Instead they should seek to negotiate, go for arbitration or even take up the matter in a court of law”.

Accountability and the urgent restoration of justice for Iraq should be the paramount and immediate task of the UN community and all those individuals and states who believe in peace and the rule of law.

PARTNERS

The Summit will provide a platform for civil society organizations from different parts of the world who have followed the continuing tragedy of Iraq, and have made efforts to terminate or to mitigate it, in addition to alert the whole world about it.

The anti-war and anti-occupation movements as well as the many millions of people worldwide who took the streets in 2002 demonstrations to protest the preparation for the invasion of Iraq, will have another opportunity through the Conference, to stress their firm position on upholding the United Nation's fine founding Charter's avowed determination: " ... to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and to re-establish: "conditions under which justice and respect for obligations arising from treaties and other sources of law can be maintained ...".

This Summit will offer Academic Institutions and Research Centers an opportunity to contribute their own research and work pertaining to this unresolved tragedy in order to expose the truth, assign responsibility and establish lessons for the future.

This summit also provides an opportunity for those countries which support peace and the rule of law in international relations among Member-States of the UN to join civil society's initiative and to state their position against the war and occupation.

OBJECTIVES

Among other objectives, the Summit will aim at achieving the following,

- Present a clear, detailed and documented account of violations and crimes committed against the Iraqi people since the US-led invasion in 2003.
- Identify ways for comprehensive legal action at all levels and within every possible jurisdiction.
- Strongly urge the UN system to take the necessary steps in support of justice for the Iraqi people including appointing a Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights Situation in Iraq.

THEMS AND ISSUES

- Examination of premeditative steps leading to the invasion of Iraq.
- The war: memories of shock, terror and civil disorder
- The destruction of state institutions and infrastructure
- The destruction of the culture and the social fabric
- Health and environmental consequences of the invasion
- Human Rights violations under the occupation

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Co-organisers:

The International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN)

Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP)

Arab Lawyers Union (ALU)

International Association of Democratic Lawyers

General Arab Women Federation (GAWF)

The United Towns Agency for the North-South Cooperation

The Indian Movement "*Tupaj Amaru*"

Organisation pour la Communication en Afrique et de Promotion de la Coopération

Economique Internationale (OCAPROCE)

Zonta International, UN Women National Committee-Italy

International Federation of University Women (IFUW)

Organisation Mondial des Associations pour l'Éducation Prénatale (OMAEP),

World Peace Council, North-South XX1

World Wide Organization for Women (WOW)

Indian Council of South America (CISA)

International Human Rights Association of American Minorities (iHRAAM)

International Institute Marie Bosco (IIMA)

Association of Victims of American Occupation Prisons

Indigenous Peoples and Nations Coalition (IPNC)

International Lawyers.org

Monitoring Net of Human Rights in Iraq (MHRI)

Wolnternational Council For Human Rights