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August 27, 2002

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As leaders and members of Mennonite Church USA we express our opposition to the proposed invasion of Iraq by the U.S. military. We believe that war will not sow seeds of peace and security. There are workable alternatives to war that will increase security in the Middle East and for the United States.

Our Mennonite witness is rooted in a Christian faith that asks us to seek the peace and welfare of all, including our enemies. The Mennonite worldwide community of faith works daily to plant peace and nurture justice in contexts of tension and violence. These global relationships, along with our 475 years of history as a Christian church, confirm our conviction that war is not the solution to our present stormy relationship with Iraq.

We do not offer you vain hope in naïve solutions. Rather, history shows that nonviolent solutions can bring substantive change – the civil rights movement in the United States, the changing governments in Poland, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa are just a few examples. The same God who created the universe has tilted it toward peace and justice for all people.

We believe that –

**1. War will cause enormous human suffering.**

War will make a bad situation worse. In the short-term we can expect tremendous loss of human life, including the additional deaths of thousands of innocent Iraqi children and civilians as well as significant U.S. casualties. In the long-term, an invasion will devastate an already crumbling Iraqi infrastructure.

Iraq has not yet economically recovered from the Iran-Iraq war or the Gulf War. UNICEF statistics show that one in eight Iraqi children die before their fifth birthday and that one in three suffer from chronic malnutrition. In the event of war, CARE International and the Iraqi Red Crescent are planning to divert much-needed development resources to emergency relief. God calls us as humans not to increase the suffering of friends or foes, but to ease their pain and despair.

## **2. War will not sow seeds of peace and security.**

War will not increase security for the United States and other Middle East countries. It will increase the already rising tide of anti-American sentiment, broaden the divide between the West and the Arab world, further destabilize the region by fueling the more radical elements, and likely amplify divisions among Iraqi ethnic and tribal groups. In addition, an invasion will likely put at risk both the minority Christian community in Iraq as well as the minority Muslim community in the United States.

## **3. Our practice of Christian faith calls us to overcome evil with good. Wise governments will do the same.**

By resorting to the aggressive use of weapons, the United States succumbs to the evil it condemns. In 1990, the United States condemned Iraq for its aggression against Kuwait. Now your administration is considering aggressive action against Iraq. The U.S. criticizes Iraq for seeking weapons for mass destruction while it is preparing to develop a new series of nuclear weapons. The United States will abdicate its moral voice to call for nonviolent resolution of other global conflicts (e.g. India-Pakistan, Israel-Palestinian) if it chooses a violent response to address its present grievance against Iraq.

We urge you to lead our country toward justice:

- demonstrate a commitment to the rule of law (e.g. preemptive strikes are not sanctioned under international law);
- cooperate with the community of nations;
- use international tribunals to address war crimes;
- model democracy, do not impose it;
- demonstrate our concern for human rights and human suffering.

## **4. There are alternatives to war that increase security in the Middle East and for the United States.**

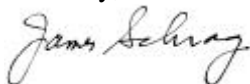
Mennonites share your goal of increased security for U.S. citizens and for all the people of the world. Instead of supporting a military invasion of Iraq, you can

- engage in respectful dialogue that replaces threats and propaganda,
- work in good faith to reintroduce UN inspectors as a means to verifiably disarm Iraq and lift economic sanctions,
- participate in international tribunals that provide appropriate means for prosecuting those who commit war crimes,
- support a regional approach to create a Middle East zone free from weapons of mass destruction.

These peaceful steps can produce positive and stabilizing change for all parties. Peaceful security is a better change-agent than war.

We will pray for you in your heavy burden of leadership. May God lead you, granting you wisdom as you face difficult choices in the weeks and months ahead.

Sincerely,



James F. Schrag, Executive Director  
Mennonite Church USA Executive Board