



Protesters in London in 2003 - from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2766805.stm>

Remembering Iraq

March 2008

20 March 2008 will be the 5th anniversary of the start of the war with Iraq. What many people feared would happen has become a daily reality of the people of Iraq. The hope and solidarity that many felt who protested against the war in 2003 has turned to despair. In the face of so much horror what can we do? We invite you to mark the eve of this anniversary. Join with other Christians in the UK and the USA in **recalling** the suffering of the people of Iraq, in **repenting** for the role our nation has played, in **challenging** the silence of our Churches, in **praying** for forgiveness and healing and in **committing** ourselves to action for peace



Remembering the dead, London 2004

Key facts

1.2 million Iraqi people have been killed directly and indirectly.

As a result of the destruction of infrastructure tens of thousands experience malnutrition and disease.

Since 2003 there has been a mass exodus of people fleeing from the ongoing violence and occupation. More than 4.4 million Iraqis have left their homes.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that one in five Iraqi refugees registered in Syria is a victim of violence. Refugee children are falling behind in education, and one UNHCR survey in Syria found 10% of the children of refugee families are working for a living. The minority Christian community has suffered from targeted attacks on churches and religious leaders.

174 British, 3,923 US, and 133 other military personnel have been killed in Iraq between March 2003 and 14 January 2008.

According to The Ministry of Defence (MoD) the UK has spent £5 billion on the war in Iraq over and above the UK's defence budget.

An Interfaith Prayer for Peace

O God, you are the source of life and peace.

Praised be you r name forever.

We know it is you who turn our minds to thoughts of peace.

Hear our prayer in this time of crisis.

Your power changes hearts.

Muslims, Christians and Jews remember, and profoundly affirm,

that they are followers of the one God, Children of Abraham, brothers and sisters.

Enemies begin to speak to one another.

Those who were estranged join hands in friendship.

Nations seek the way of peace together.

Strengthen our resolve to give witness to these truths by the way we live.

Give to us:

Understanding that puts an end to strife;

Mercy that quenches hatred, and

Forgiveness that overcomes vengeance.

Empower all people to live Empower all people to live in your law of love

Amen (Pax Christi)

Bible bits...

Thus says the Lord: 'A voice is heard in Ramah, lamenting and weeping bitterly: it is Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.' Jr 31:15.

We were hoping for peace - n o good came of it! For the moment of cure - nothing but terror! Jr 14:19.

Action Ideas

- Arrange a **vigil, prayer service or assembly** in your school on or near the 19 March to remind people of the 5th anniversary of the war with Iraq. You could read out the names of some of those killed in the war as a part of your vigil - see resources below.
- **Pray** during Holy Week for the people of Iraq and for a just peace. Fast on 19 March and offer the money you save to an organisation working for justice in Iraq.
- **Write** to your local MP - about the plight of Iraqi refugees and the situation of Christian minorities in Iraq. Ask what actions are being taken by the UK Government to bring justice and sustained peace to the people of Iraq.

Recommended resources

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/feb/06/iraq.topstories3> how the war is affecting young people in Iraq

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/iraq/> resources for teaching about the Iraq conflict for ages 8-16.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/specials/iraq/default.stm> background and stories of young people affected by the war.

<http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/ME.HTML> - links to Christian peace witness leaflet, prayer, worship and liturgy resources, names of some of those killed in Iraq.