

Using UN Resolution 377: "Uniting For Peace"

By Jeremy Brecher, historian and author of 12 books including *STRIKE!* and *Globalization From Below*.

The UN General Assembly is hovering on the edge of calling an emergency session to challenge the U.S. attack on Iraq. But U.S. opposition has been fierce. The world's "other superpower" global public opinion as expressed in the global peace movement can tip the balance if it concentrates on demanding a General Assembly meeting to halt the war on Iraq now.

Emergency General Assembly session on Iraq

A coalition of Arab, other Islamic, and developing countries has decided to ask for a special session on Iraq at the UN General Assembly. The Organization of the Islamic Conference Group (OIC) declared on March 31, that it is ready to take the Iraq war to the General Assembly. The OIC includes 57 UN member countries.

The General Assembly special session will be formally requested by Malaysian Ambassador Raetam MHD Isa, who heads the 115-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of developing countries at the United Nations. The Malaysian Ambassador "plans to request the special session, in a letter to...the assembly's acting president" before April 9." The point of the request is to save the lives of Iraqi civilians," one Arab diplomat commented. However, according to UPI, "An informal tally shows that there are not enough nations aligned with the Arab states to bring the topic before the body.

Background

At a meeting March 24, Arab foreign ministers condemned the invasion of Iraq and called on the U.S. and Britain to immediately withdraw their forces without condition. The League's UN ambassador said, "We will ask that the invasion stop, that the invading

forces will be withdrawn, and that Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence will be preserved."

The League requested and received a debate in the Security Council. But the decision was made not to submit a resolution against the war since a veto by the U.S. and Britain was nearly certain and the failure to pass such a resolution might be used to defend the war's legitimacy.

Under a procedure called "Uniting for Peace," the issue can be taken from the Security Council to the General Assembly where there is no veto. The procedure provides that, if there is a "threat to peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression" and permanent members of the Security Council do not agree on action, the General Assembly can meet immediately and recommend collective measures to UN members to "maintain or restore international peace and security."



Resolution Content

The wording of a possible General Assembly resolution is under discussion. An OIC statement called for an immediate cease-fire, withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq, and respect for the sovereignty and political independence of Iraq and its neighbors. However, the OIC is considering proposing a milder resolution in the General Assembly, expressing regret for the use of force against Iraq, in an effort to get support from more nations, notably European nations.

Other elements that have been

suggested for a General Assembly resolution include reassertion of the UN inspectors' authority over the disarmament of any Iraqi weapons of mass destruction; reaffirmation that all wars that are not purely self-defense against imminent or actual attack are illegal; and recommendations that countries, individuals, and civil society act to implement the resolution by means of nonviolent sanctions.

U.S. Opposition

The U.S. has been "aggressively lobbying governments around the world for the past two weeks to help head off an emergency assembly session on Iraq.

"We don't think a General Assembly meeting is necessary," a U.S. official said. "This type of session is only going to divide U.N. members."

Greenpeace has released the text of a communication from the United States to UN representatives around the world leaked by an "incensed" UN delegate. It stated, "Given the highly charged atmosphere, the United States would regard a General Assembly session on Iraq as unhelpful and as directed against the U.S. Please know that this question as well as your position on it is important to the U.S." It warned/threatened that "the staging of such a divisive session could do additional harm to the UN."

Worldwide Action

The following are a few recent examples of the arenas in which support for a General Assembly emergency meeting on Iraq is being generated:

Parliaments

Support for a General Assembly emergency session on Iraq based on Uniting for Peace has been expressed by parliamentary bodies around the world. The Russian Duma passed a resolution calling for General Assembly intervention in Iraq. So did the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

Petitions

A Greenpeace web petition at

<www.greenpeace.org> calling for a General assembly session has received 60,000 signatures worldwide. There is also a European-initiated petition at <www.ufp.ht.st>

Demonstrations

Many of the huge demonstrations around the world against the Iraq war have called for the General Assembly to meet under "Uniting for Peace." A Demonstration in Santiago, Chile urged Chile's President to back a call for the United Nations General Assembly to hold a special session to "adopt moral sanctions against Bush.

Religious Groups

A group of Italian Catholic associations (Azione Cattolica, Acli, Agesci, PaxChristi, MCL, Forum Terzo Settore), allied in the organization "Sentinelle del matting," petitioned the Italian government demanding that "the UN General Assembly be called to block, based on resolution 337 [Uniting for Peace], any action which does not comply with the UN Charter so as to bring peace." They appealed for "a cease fire which will put an end to the useless massacre in Iraq.

Women

International women's organizations, including MADRE, Women of Color Resource Center, Center for Women's Global Leadership, and the International Women's Human Rights Law Clinic joined other women's organizations worldwide to call for an emergency General Assembly meeting. "The resolve of many UN member states to stand firm against the U.S., reinforced by the call to enact Uniting for Peace, offer hope for a revitalized international system."

Source: *Counterpunch*, April 2, 2003 <www.counterpunch.org/brecher04022003.html>

The information in this article on Uniting for Peace is based on "A U.N. Alternative to War: 'Uniting for Peace'" by Michael Ratner, Center for Constitutional Rights and Jules Lobel, University of Pittsburgh Law School.

Read UN resolution 377 "Uniting for Peace" (Nov. 3, 1950): <domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/62c13fb98d54fe240525672700581383/55c2b84da9e0052b05256554005726c6!OpenDocument>

Stop the War Now!

Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), who leads opposition to the war in Iraq within the U.S. House of Representatives, issued this statement on the House floor, on April 1, 2003:

Stop the war now. As Baghdad will be encircled, this is the time to get the UN back in to inspect Baghdad and the rest of Iraq for biological and chemical weapons. Our troops should not have to be the ones who will find out, in combat, whether Iraq has such weapons. Why put our troops at greater risk? We could get the United Nations inspectors back in.

Stop the war now. Before we send our troops into house-to-house combat in Baghdad, a city of five million people. Before we ask our troops to take up the burden of shooting innocent civilians in the fog of war.

Stop the war now. This war has been advanced on lie upon lie. Iraq was not responsible for 9/11. Iraq was not responsible for any role al-Qaeda may have had in 9/11. Iraq was not responsible for anthrax attacks on this country. Iraq did not try to acquire nuclear weapons technology from Niger. This war is built on falsehood.

Stop the war now. We are not defending America in Iraq. Iraq did not attack this nation. Iraq has no ability to attack this nation. Each innocent civilian casualty represents a threat to America for years to come and will end up making our nation less safe. The seventy-five billion dollar supplemental needs to be challenged because each dime we spend on this war makes America less safe. Only international cooperation will help us meet the challenge of terrorism. After 9/11 all Americans remember we had the support and the sympathy of the world. Every nation was ready to be of assistance to the United States in meeting the challenge of terrorism. And yet, with this war, we have squandered the sympathy of the world. We have brought upon this nation the anger of



Dennis J. Kucinich

the world. We need the cooperation of the world, to find the terrorists before they come to our shores.

Stop this war now.

- 75 billion dollars more for war.
- Three-quarters of a trillion dollars for tax cuts, but no money for veterans' benefits.
- Money for war. No money for health care in America, but money for war.
- No money for social security, but money for war.
- We have money to blow up bridges over the Tigris and the Euphrates, but no money to build bridges in our own cities.
- We have money to ruin the health of the Iraqi children, but no money to repair the health of our own children and our educational programs.

Stop this war now. It is wrong. It is illegal. It is unjust and it will come to no good for this country.

Stop this war now. Show our wisdom and our humanity, to be able to stop it, to bring back the United Nations into the process. Rescue this moment. Rescue this nation from a war that is wrong, that is unjust, that is immoral.

Stop this war now.

Source: Speech in the U.S. House of Representatives, April 1, 2003. Dennis Kucinich website: <www.kucinich.us/speeches.htm>

Elmer Kennedy

Elmer, who died last December in Victoria, served with the RCAF in Canada and England and received his B.Sc. in Engineering from the U. of A. after the

war. Elmer gave his time and energy to many organisations including the World Federalists and UN Association. He was a keen and active philatelist and curler. He is mourned and missed by his family and VANA friends in BC.