

WORLD TRIBUNAL ON IRAQ

PLATFORM TEXT

[Istanbul, October 29 2003]

Origins of the project

The idea that had sprung up in several places around the world of organising an international tribunal against the war in Iraq, was discussed and in principle supported at the Anti-War Meetings in Berlin, Jakarta and Geneva, Paris and Cancun. The Jakarta Peace Consensus made a declaration committing itself to the realization of an international war crimes tribunal. The Networking Conference (European and Cordoba Networks for Peace and Human Rights) organized by the Bertrand Russel Peace Foundation in Brussels also devoted time and space for the discussion of the issue and the idea received broad support.

The working group formed at this networking conference in Brussels on 26/27 June, 2003, discussed the idea and possibilities of convening an international tribunal to investigate and establish the crimes perpetrated against the people of Iraq and humanity. The group in Turkey was entrusted with the task of acting as the secretariat and clearing house, carrying out the coordination in close contact with the groups in Brussels, Hiroshima, New York, London and others.

The meeting of the Coordination Committee in Istanbul on October 27-29 2003 decided upon the concept, the form and the aims of the project.

The legitimacy of the project

A war of aggression was launched despite the opposition of people and governments all over the world, yet there is no court or authority that will judge the acts of the US and its allies. If the official authorities fail, then moral authority can speak for the world.

Our legitimacy derives from:

- taking this initiative owing to the failure of official international institutions to hold accountable those who committed grave international crimes and constitute a menace to world peace;
- being part of the worldwide anti-war movement which expressed its opposition to this invasion;
- the Iraqi people resisting occupation;
- the duty of all people of conscience to take action against wars of aggression, war crimes, crimes against humanity and other breaches of international law;
- acting on the basis of the struggles of the past to develop systems of peaceful co-existence and prevent future aggression and breaches of the UN Charter;
- giving voice to the voiceless victims of this war we are articulating the concerns of civil society as expressed in the most active parts of the social justice and peace movements;
- bringing the principles of international law to the forefront.

Our legitimacy will be earned through the process of achieving our aims.

The tasks of the tribunal

The first task of the tribunal is to investigate the crimes committed by the US government in launching the Iraq war. In spite of the world movement that condemned this war and against all international legislation the US

government forced its premeditated war-strategy upon the world. Moreover the US-government requests impunity and puts itself above all international laws and conventions.

The second task is to investigate allegations of war crimes during the aggression, crimes against occupation law, genocide and crimes against humanity. These may include the sanctions, the use of illegal weapons which kill over generations, such as uranium weapons.

The third task is to investigate and expose the broader context of the New Imperial World Order. The tribunal would therefore consider the doctrines of "pre-emptive war" and all its entails: "benevolent hegemony", "full spectrum dominance" and "multiple simultaneous theatre wars"... In this process the tribunal will investigate the vast economic interests that are involved in this war-logic.

The tribunal will, after examining reports and evidence, listening to witnesses (Iraqi and international) and hearing victims, reach a decision.

The aims

In organising this International Tribunal we pursue four fundamental aims.

- Our first goal is to establish the facts and to inform the public about crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes during the occupation, about the real goals behind this war, about the inspiration of the American politics and the dangers they present for world peace. This is especially important to contribute in breaking the wall of lies diffused by the war-coalition and their imbedded press.
- For the peace movement and the global anti-war protest, the tribunal presents an opportunity to continue mobilisation. The tribunal should not remain an academic endeavour but should be backed by a strong international network. Anti-war and peace movements, which carried out the big mass movements against the attack on Iraq have in principle adopted the idea of indicting the aggressors and turning this into a campaign.
- We consider the tribunal as a continuing process. The investigation of what happened in Iraq is of prime importance to restore truth and preserve collective memory against the constant rewriting of history. We have to challenge the silence of the international institutions and impress on them to fulfill their obligations to international law. In judging the recent past our aim is to prevent illegal wars in the future. In this process the tribunal can formulate recommendations on international law and expand notions of justice and ethical-political awareness. It can contribute to break the tradition of victors' tribunals and give a voice to the victims of the war. In doing so we support the demand of large parts of world public opinion and the Iraqi people to end the occupation and restore Iraqi sovereignty.
- The International Tribunal initiative wants to inscribe itself in a broader movement to stop the establishment of the new imperial world order as a permanent state of exception with constant wars as one of its main tools. The Tribunal can bring a moral, political and judicial judgment that contributes to build a world of peace and justice.

Form of the tribunal

The general plan is to hold an independent world tribunal with: associated events, associated commissions of inquiry, commissions of investigation, hearings and specific issue tribunal sessions in various countries, culminating in a final tribunal session in Istanbul. So far, there will be hearings in Brussels and Hiroshima. Other proposals at the moment include New York, Copenhagen and Mexico. Associated events will be held in London and Mumbai.

Being confronted with the paradox that we want to end impunity but we do not have the enforcement power to do so, we have to steer a middle way between mere political protest and academic symposiums without any judicial ambition on the one hand and on the otherhand impeccable procedural trials of which the outcome is known beforehand. This paradox that we are just citizens and therefore have no right to judge in a strict judicial way and have at the same time have the duty as citizens to oppose criminal and war policies should be our starting point and our strength.

Although these commissions of inquiry will be working in conformity with an overall concept that will apply to the whole tribunal (spelled out in the Charter), the hearings will also have some autonomy concerning format. By approaching the Iraq case from as many angles as possible (international law, war crimes, occupational law, political and economical analysis...), we strengthen our common objective to end impunity and resist the imperial wars. In this way the hearings will mutually enforce each other and all the findings will be brought together in the final session in Istanbul.

In order to be as inclusive as possible, we will support and recognize all endeavors to resist impunity. The project will endorse and support the efforts to bring national authorities and warmongers to national (like the complaint against general Tommy Franks in Belgium) or international courts (ICC).

Timing

The core series of hearings will start on Wednesday April 14 2004 in Brussels and end in final tribunal session in Istanbul that will start on March 20 2005, second anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq. These will be preceded by intensive inquiries, networking and campaigning.

Appeal to the national and international movements

We address an appeal to all organizations and individuals to support this project.

We invite organizations to endorse and participate at various levels. They could:

1. Undertake to organize a hearing or an associated event.
2. Host a hearing.
3. Contribute by contacts, names of people who would qualify to take part in the various components of the tribunal and establish the initial contacts with those people.
4. Contribute names & contacts of persons and organizations of expertise who are already researching into the various aspects of the crimes and violations in question.
5. Undertake to follow up with the preparation of certain reports and make them available for the use of the tribunal.
6. Build a web page in as many languages as possible and constant flow of information.
7. Undertake to organize the local campaigns around the tribunal.
8. Contribute financially towards meeting the expenses involved in realizing this tribunal.

We endorse the initiative of the World Tribunal on Iraq

Name : Country :

Email :

I sign in my personal name I sign in name of my organisation

Organisation :

Send back to : peaceturkey@ttnet.net.tr ; iraq-tribunal@lists.riseup.net