



NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby Position on Peace Building in Iraq

BACKGROUND: NETWORK opposed the invasion of Iraq in 2003, but since then has urged peace building in order to responsibly end the occupation. Peace building includes governmental capacity building, economic development, conflict and dispute resolution training and processes and addressing the needs of both refugees and internally displaced people. Only by a commitment of Iraqi, the United States and the international community to the long term development of civil society will there be peace and stability in that country.

IRAQI REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED: There are millions of Iraqis who have been displaced because of the 2003 invasion and many more who were displaced prior to that. This has resulted in a complex and growing crisis. The plight of the refugees in the region is exacerbated by the Palestinian situation. No one wants to create another quasi-permanent refugee community. Therefore, resolution of the crisis needs to be a top priority.

- **RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES:** Increase the target Iraqi resettlement goal to at least 45,000 refugees this year and allocate more resources to expedite Department of Homeland Security processing. This effort should be lead by a White House level staff.
- **MIGRATION AND REFUGEE ACCOUNT (MRA):** Increase funding for the Migration Refugee Assistance (MRA) Account through FY09 appropriations and supplemental bills.
- **REFUGEE FUNDING:** Commit to at least 50% funding of all appeals for Iraq's humanitarian crisis from the UN, International Organization for Migration, Red Cross and other NGOs with services to the displaced population.
- **BILATERAL FUNDING FOR HOST COUNTRIES:** Fund the governments of Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt to ease the burden placed on host governments with large refugee populations. Create mechanisms for and support to the refugees, NGOs and UNHCR operating within Syria.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: The most effective programs for economic development in Iraq have been the small programs that are run by Iraqis for Iraqis. These programs need continued support and development. The best known of these are the Community Action Programs (CAP) which utilizes a community organizing model and have effectively brought neighborhoods together to respond to local needs. Continued funding of these programs is essential for long term stability in Iraq and should be contained in the regular budget process.

GOVERNMENT CAPACITY BUILDING: A large percentage of Iraqis with government experience have fled Iraq leaving inexperienced people to run a government. Building their capacity is essential for the long term stability of Iraq. Simple things like developing property law and dispute resolution processes that are fair, transparent, quick is essential before there can be any significant return of displaced persons. Additionally, it is critical to develop effective anti-corruption programs and practices.

INTERNATIONALIZATION: The United States cannot be a neutral broker of peace among the various factions. It is imperative that the services of the international community (especially all of Iraq's neighbors) be used to bring an effective end to the continuing conflict.

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Contact: Simone Campbell, SSS scampbell@networklobby.org, 202-347-9797 x227