

For Immediate Release

June 9, 2005

CONTACTS:

Jeff Leys of Voices in the Wilderness

Phone: +1-773-784-8065

Email: jeffleys@vitw.org

Justin Alexander of Jubilee Iraq

Jordan: +962 796497506 or Iraq: +964  
7902308186

Email: justin@jubileeiraq.org

**FAST FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR IRAQ  
JUNE 16 – 30 AT U.N. IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

Chicago, Illinois, United States & Baghdad, Iraq — International social justice activists (from Iraq, the U.S., the U.K. and elsewhere) will fast at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland from June 16<sup>th</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> to demand economic justice for Iraqi citizens. The fast will address the key issues of war reparations claims imposed against Iraq, debt cancellation and reconstruction. Hans von Sponek will join the fasters on June 16. Mr. Von Sponek resigned as director of the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance program in Iraq in 2000 in protest of the economic sanctions.

The fast will coincide with the final meeting of the United Nations Compensation Commission (U.N.C.C.), which takes place from June 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> in Geneva. The U.N.C.C. will determine how much of a remaining \$65 billion in war reparations claims will be imposed against Iraq. These claims relate to the invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990-91 by Saddam Hussein's regime. Iraq has paid \$19 billion in reparations claims, including over \$2 billion since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime. The UNCC imposed an additional \$33 billion in war reparations claims against Iraq which are yet to be paid. Virtually all unpaid claims are owed to oil companies or governments. Virtually all claims of individual people are settled and paid.

Fasters will present five key demands which must be met for economic justice for Iraqis:

- 1) An immediate moratorium on war reparations payments and claims;
- 2) A new U.N. Security Council resolution which cancels all unpaid war reparations already imposed against Iraq;
- 3) The elimination of all odious debt, comprising most of the more that \$100bn of foreign debt, incurred by Saddam Hussein's regime as determined by an odious debt arbitration tribunal in which Iraq has full due process rights;
- 4) That no economic conditions be imposed upon Iraq by the international community through such mechanisms as an International Monetary Fund (IMF) stand-by-agreement or otherwise;
- 5) Full funding for the reconstruction of Iraq which focuses on the social needs of the Iraqi people, is directed by Iraqis, and is without any strings attached.

--more--

In announcing the fast, organizers from Jubilee Iraq and Voices in the Wilderness state:

“As international social justice activists, including citizens of Iraq, the U.S. and the U.K., we stand united and resolved to seek an end to the ongoing economic exploitation of Iraq. Such exploitation is a form of violence which must be resisted. Those of us who are citizens of the U.S. and U.K. bear a special responsibility as it is our respective countries which created and held firm to the economic sanctions regime which devastated Iraq’s health care, education, water and electrical infrastructure.

“Iraq is saddled with enormous foreign financial claims incurred by Saddam Hussein and his regime. These claims take the form of war reparations imposed against Iraq for Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait as well as the odious debt, coming from loans which financed his regime from 1981-90. These war reparations and odious debt ought to be canceled without limitations and without any conditions attached.

“It is neither right nor just that the Iraqi people be required to pay in perpetuity for the regime of Saddam Hussein.”

Jubilee Iraq and Voices in the Wilderness are initiating the fast. Jubilee Iraq was formed in March 2003 as a network of Iraqis and internationals (including lawyers, economists, politicians and aid workers) dedicated to ensuring that the Iraqi people are not unjustly forced to pay Saddam’s bills. It is independent and involves people of diverse political opinions who are all united on this issue. In 2004 it organized demonstrations at two UNCC meetings as well as at the Paris Club and the IMF Autumn summit in Washington. It organized a conference of Iraqi economists in Berlin and conducted in-depth consultations with Iraqi civil society and political parties, culminating in a bill which passed unanimously in the Interim National Assembly in November 2004 condemning the odious debt and reparations.

Voices in the Wilderness was formed in 1996 to challenge and oppose the economic sanctions imposed against the people of Iraq. Voices was formed as a campaign of active nonviolence. Delegations traveled to Iraq, bringing medicine and other humanitarian supplies to Iraqis in violation of the economic sanctions and U.S. law, acts for which the U.S. government seeks to penalize Voices. Voices believes the imposition of war reparations claims against Iraq; demands for repayment of “odious debt”; and forced restructuring of Iraq’s economy to benefit the IMF and non-Iraqi financial interests is a continuing of the economic and military warfare waged against Iraq since 1991. Voices opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the current occupation of Iraq. Voices also calls for full funding for the reconstruction of Iraq, without strings attached to the funding and as determined by the Iraqi people to be to their benefit and not the benefit of multinational corporations.

#####