

February 28, 2003

The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Chrétien:

We write as Christian leaders in many communities in Canada to encourage you in the pursuit of peace in relation to the crisis over Iraq. We pray with people around the world for the human community, that God will make us all instruments of peace. We pray with the psalmist for God's promise, that leaders will emerge in whose days justice shall flourish, and peace, till the moon fails (Psalm 72:7).

We share the concern of millions at the relentless efforts to mobilize the world for another war in the vain hope that it will bring peace and security. We fear that the combination of the Iraqi government's intransigence and the war preparations of the American and British governments will inflict deadly consequences on the people of Iraq. We implore you to redouble Canada's efforts to prevent this war.

We are aware that the regime of Saddam Hussein has led Iraq on paths of violence and defiance of international standards that protect human rights and that prohibit the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction. This must be condemned, as must the readiness of Washington and London to resort to violence. Neither are means to sustainable disarmament and peace.

Despite the gravity of this situation, we see hope as people the world over express grave concern about a potential war and its devastation. We are encouraged by the tens of thousands of Canadians who have endorsed "Prepare for Peace in Iraq", the Canadian churches' statement that declares, "war is not the answer!" Your office has received weekly deliveries of the names of people who have signed this statement.

We are grateful that you and your government continue to seek and support alternatives to war and to insist that decision making in this crisis must be collective, not unilateral, through the United Nations. Still, we must impress upon you at this time our firm belief that war on Iraq, even with explicit Security Council authorization, would be the worst option.

In our letter of September 25, 2002, we strongly urged attention to alternatives, especially a renewal of the inspections process. We are therefore enormously heartened that, through the United Nations, the inspections process has been renewed. It represents an important part of a credible strategy and alternative to war. It appears to be making a significant impact.

We understand and respect the concern about Iraq's possible possession of weapons of mass destruction and whether it has, or might acquire, the means to use them against its own people and its neighbours. However, as long as inspectors are active in Iraq it will not be possible for the regime to undertake such activities without being detected.

In as much as there is a continuing danger that chemical and biological weapons which are not accounted for could be diverted to non-state terrorist organizations, it must be recognized that such a danger would increase, not decrease, in the context of the unanticipated consequences of war.

While the inspections process is not perfect, it is now fulfilling the most urgent requirement: providing credible assurance to the international community that there is not an imminent threat of Iraqi use of weapons of mass destruction.

In light of this, there is no justification for choosing war when an alternative to the use of military force is already working to provide verification and containment.

The need now is to continue with the inspections and to set up the "Ongoing Monitoring and Verification" process as mandated by the UN Security Council. This must remain in place until all weapons of mass destruction have been accounted for and destroyed, until the Government of Iraq permanently disavows such weapons, and until the world community is confident that its disavowal is credible.

We ask you to remind the international community to remember first the safety and well-being of the people of Iraq. They have suffered much under the present regime. The rest of the world, as the churches' joint statement puts it, must support them with new vigour in their struggle to free themselves from an oppressive regime, "not with more bombs and missiles, but with sustained moral, political and material support" toward the achievement of human rights, peace and security.

Therefore, we again appeal to you and the UN Security Council to say an unambiguous "no" to war on Iraq, and a clear "yes" to building on the current process. To sweep aside hard won achievements in favour of war would be a travesty of justice and a tragedy of frightening

proportions.

We recognize that this is a time of immense pressure and reflection for you and your colleagues. Please be assured of our continuing prayers and support.

Sincerely,

Archbishop Michael Peers, Primate  
The Anglican Church of Canada

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate  
Armenian Holy Apostolic Church, Canadian Diocese

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Bellous, Executive Minister  
Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec

The Right Rev. Maurice Hicks, General Superintendent  
British Methodist Episcopal Church

Bishop Jacques Berthelet, C.S.V., Bishop of Saint-Jean-Longueuil,  
President, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

John Calder, Clerk  
Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

The Rev. Fr. Messale Engeda, Presiding Priest  
Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in the Western Hemisphere

The Rev. Raymond Schultz, National Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Don Peters, Executive Director  
Mennonite Central Committee Canada

Henry Krause, Moderator  
Mennonite Church Canada

The Right Rev. Seraphim, Bishop of Ottawa and Canada

Orthodox Church in America

The Very Rev. Anthony Nikolic  
Polish National Catholic Church of Canada

The Rev. J. Mark Lewis, Moderator, 128th General Assembly  
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

The Rev. Siebrand Wilts, Stated Clerk  
Regional Synod of Canada, Reformed Church in America

Metropolitan Archbishop Wasyly (Fedak), Primate

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

The Right Rev. Dr. Marion Pardy, Moderator  
United Church of Canada

The Rev. William F. Veenstra, Canadian Ministries Director  
Christian Reformed Church in North America

The Rev. F. Thomas Rutherford, Regional Minister  
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