

# END THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ NOW

Members of WPJF were out and about in Wrexham Town Centre on Saturday 22nd May for a morning of action calling for an end to the occupation of Iraq. While thousands demonstrated in London and across the country as part of a national day of action, passers-by in Wrexham were invited to sign a giant letter to Tony Blair calling for the earliest withdrawal of British troops from Iraq. Over 300 people signed the letter during the morning, with 90 signing individual letters of protest. Campaigners from WPJF and from Oswestry Peace groups also handed out copies of Wrexham Peace & Justice News and leaflets with a two-fold message: firstly that there will never be peace in Iraq while Coalition Forces remain, and secondly that the imminent "handover of sovereignty" is no more than a sham.



WPJF members and peace activists from Oswestry in Wrexham on May 22nd

## EXTRACT FROM WPJF PRESS RELEASE - 22nd MAY

The Coalition Forces have totally lost the confidence of the people of Iraq and will never be able to restore peace and security. As the security situation deteriorates by the day, more innocent people are being killed and British troops are under ever-increasing danger of attack.

Far from "winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people", the occupation has been managed so badly that almost all Iraqis now support the resistance movement. Killing innocent civilians including women and children waving white flags; shooting at ambulances; detaining people without trial; beating and humiliating prisoners... none of these things are consistent with the freedom and liberation Iraqi people were promised.

We want to see an international peace-keeping force which is acceptable to the Iraqi people replacing the current occupying forces, but the most important issue right now is to get US and UK forces out of Iraq. The idea that we are currently calming the situation by our presence is ridiculous.

Coalition troops are part of the problem, not part of the solution. Any new peace-keeping force should not include Coalition troops, as the Iraqis are under no illusions about the intentions of the occupiers.

## EXTRACT FROM OUR LEAFLET ON THE HANDOVER OF SOVEREIGNTY

The current unelected, handpicked governing council will be replaced by another group of appointed rather than elected leaders. The US is imposing a governmental system on Iraq which is not the choice of the people.

138,000 Coalition soldiers will remain in Iraq after the "handover". We are told that Coalition forces must stay to bring peace and security to Iraq, even though it is increasingly apparent that their very presence is a destabilising and disruptive influence and that peace and security cannot be achieved while they remain.

The new administration will have no say over the presence of Coalition forces in Iraq and these forces will not be under Iraqi command. Colin Powell has said: *"It's important to let the multi-national force... operate under its own command... we have to be able to operate freely, which, in some ways, infringes on what some would call 'full sovereignty'."* Indeed.

Measures have been put in place to keep the control of Iraqi oil sales out of the hands of the Iraqi people. The UN and Coalition will control oil revenues and this will be used as a lever to force Iraq to do as it's told.

As contracts to rebuild Iraq are awarded by members of the Coalition to their friends, the restructuring of Iraq will benefit western corporations and, as we have already seen from attacks on contractors, this will lead to even more resentment and unrest in Iraq.

Recently, George W Bush said about the Iraqis: *"It's going to take a while for them to understand what freedom is all about."* Iraqis have learned over the past year that US-style freedom involves the killing of innocent men, women and children; losing the right to move about freely; incarceration without trial; beatings and humiliation; living in constant fear; unemployment. It is hardly surprising that the Iraqi people find this sort of "freedom" difficult to understand.



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