

of asylum seekers breaches the international Convention Against Torture.

Thousands of people remain in US military custody in Guantanamo Bay, Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere without any recourse to legal processes, subject to arbitrary and indefinite detention, torture, and cruel and degrading treatment.

War on terrorism? War is terrorism

The 'war on terrorism' has fuelled racism, hatred and bloodshed around the world; spending on secret services and armed forces is going up, spending on real security - meeting people's needs - is going down. The only people benefiting from the 'war on terrorism' are corporate and political elites, and weapons manufacturers.

On September 11 2001, as on every other day of the year, more than 31,000* children under the age of five also died in tragic circumstances - from disease and malnutrition because of lack of access to clean water, food or basic health care. On that day, as on every other day of the year, global military expenditure in a world 'at peace' averaged more than two billion US dollars*.

If the governments of the world were serious about reducing the threat of terrorism, this is an obvious place to start. When people have access to clean water, adequate food, education, and health care; representative government which listens to them; and they are engaged in socially useful work, they tend not to engage in destructive violent acts.

Working to stop the day to day terror people all around the world suffer because of economic and social inequalities is the only way forward. Killing more people is not a solution. Military 'solutions' such as bombing only ever fuel hate and anger; increase violence; provoke further atrocities; and create more instability, grief and suffering on into the future. It is time to stop the cycle of hatred and violence - matching terror with terror is not the answer.

September 11 was the day the world could have changed - but regrettably, it did not



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[* total for 2001 divided by 365]

September 11 - the day the world changed?

The terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11 2001 stunned and shocked the world. The number of people who died was eventually confirmed as 2,872. In the outpouring of grief and horror which followed, September 11 was described by some as "the day the world changed".

It was a day when lessons could have been learned from tragedy:

- ✧ a day when the causes of terrorism could have been examined and a genuine commitment made to eliminate them;
- ✧ a day when a decision could have been made to establish the guilt of those responsible and to bring them to justice;
- ✧ a day when a decision could have been made not to respond to terror with terror.

It was a day the world could have changed

When the United States government identified Osama Bin Laden as the main suspect in the Sept 11 attacks, the Taleban government offered to hand him over to a third party to be held pending trial. The US government refused that offer. In that moment they chose to abandon justice, and to follow a violent rather than a peaceful path. Together with their allies, they attacked the people of Afghanistan, the people of one of the weakest poorest nations in the world.

The people of Afghanistan did not carry out the attacks in New York and Washington. Bombing them was not justice, it was vengeance; and an excuse to extend the US government's strategic and economic interests in the region.

“We firmly believe that the real lesson of September 11 is that war and violence are the problems, not the solutions.”

Peaceful Tomorrows, US families whose relatives were killed in the Sept 11 attacks.

More than 5,000 civilians were killed in the initial bombing and occupation of Afghanistan; no-one knows how many people have been injured and maimed since then, or suffered malnutrition and starvation because of the interruption to delivery of humanitarian aid. Weapons such as cluster bombs were, and continue to be, used in Afghanistan - weapons that will kill and maim for years to come.

The attack on the people of Afghanistan was the first major military offensive in the 'war on terrorism'. In March 2003, the second began with an all-out assault on the Iraqi people. This was not the first time the US government and its allies had attacked the people of Iraq. The effects of the previous US-led war in 1991 were summarised in these words:

“Nothing that we had seen or read had quite prepared us for the particular form of devastation which has now befallen [Iraq]. The recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure of what had been until January 1991, a rather highly urbanised and mechanised society ... Now, most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age”. Marti Ahtisaari, Convener of the Post-War United Nations Mission to Iraq, 1991.

Between 1991 and 2003, the US government and its allies ensured that punitive economic sanctions against Iraq continued - as a result, by 2000 more than 4,500 children were dying every month from starvation, diseases of malnutrition, and lack of medical supplies caused by the sanctions. Every few days, US and British warplanes bombed within their self-declared 'no-fly zones' killing and injuring civilians and further destroying the infrastructure on which life depends. More

than 1.5 million Iraqi people died in those 12 years because of the effects of the sanctions and the bombing.

The sanctions were kept in place allegedly to stop Iraq producing weapons of mass destruction, even though UN weapons inspectors were in Iraq. Yet the US government has more weapons of mass destruction than anyone else, and it will not permit inspections nor destroy its own arsenals. The same UN resolution which refers to UN weapons inspectors in Iraq, also required the establishment of a 'weapons of mass destruction free zone' in the Middle East. Yet the Israeli government's nuclear weapons arsenal is not subject to UN weapons inspections, nor have economic sanctions been imposed.

Using the same excuse of suspected weapons of mass destruction, the invasion of Iraq began in March 2003 with intensive aerial bombardment. In October 2004, the results of the first nation nationwide survey of Iraqi deaths since the US-led invasion was published in The Lancet - the researchers concluded that up to 100,000 people had died as a result of the war, including many women and children killed in coalition air strikes. There are no figures available for the number of people who have suffered non-fatal injuries.

Since September 2001, the 'war on terrorism' has spread throughout the globe: US special forces troops have been deployed in the Philippines; new US military bases have been established in the Middle East and Southern Central Asia - there are now US military bases in 132 countries. The 'war on terrorism' has been used by the Russian government to increase military operations in Chechnya; by the Chinese government to intensify repression of the Muslim Ujigurs and Tibetans; by the Indonesian government to justify their continued brutal occupation of West Papua; by the Israeli government to justify the violent reoccupation of Palestinian territory; by the US and British governments to make explicit threats to use nuclear weapons against the people of non-nuclear weapons states ... and now the US government appears to be planning a military attack on Iran.

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“governments [are] hiding behind the ongoing war on terrorism to trample civil liberties and crush troublesome opponents.” UN Human Rights Commissioner, 2002  
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The 'war on terrorism' has been used by governments around the world to justify extraordinarily repressive legislation which breaches basic human rights. In May 2004, the United Nations Committee Against Torture pointed out that the New Zealand government's anti-terrorism legislation and post-September 11 treatment