

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Friday, March 17, 2006**

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**U.S. Citizens for Peace to Hold Peaceful Demonstration Calling for an End to the US-led Occupation of Iraq, at the United States Embassy on Monday, March 20, at 8:00 a.m.**

SAN SALVADOR—On Monday, March 20, at 8:00a.m., U.S. Citizens for Peace, a coalition of United States citizens living, working, and studying in El Salvador; will gather outside the United States Embassy in Santa Elena for a peaceful demonstration—on the third anniversary of the invasion and occupation of Iraq—exercising our rights as citizens to voice our concerns about the situation and desires for a peaceful end to the conflict in Iraq and the U.S. military occupation there. Our presence is part of the Global Call to Action, coinciding with nonviolent demonstrations at Embassies and the offices of war profiteers throughout the world.

We call upon the Bush Administration to transfer control of Iraq to the United Nations—to withdraw U.S. troops, allow the international community to objectively broker the peace and end plans for permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq—and to abandon and unequivocally denounce the systematic use of torture.

As United States Citizens living in El Salvador, having seen firsthand in this country the devastating and enduring effects of U.S. intervention, we are opposed to the occupation and are committed to nonviolence and peace in the Middle East and in our world. We oppose our government's foreign policy of using warfare and torture to ostensibly spread democracy – a stance we do not support nor believe in.

Since the beginning of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003, **2317 U.S. soldiers** have been killed<sup>1</sup> and between **33,710 y 37,832 Iraqi civilians** have been reported killed<sup>2</sup> (with the potential unreported civilian casualties at 100,000+)<sup>3</sup>. The number of U.S. air strikes rose almost fivefold in 2005, and U.S. planes have dropped five-hundred-pound bombs, anti-personnel cluster bombs and white phosphorus on residential areas.<sup>4</sup>

We believe we must speak out when the U.S. government ignores the Geneva Conventions, the International Convention Against Torture, the recently signed McCain amendment and the prohibition on spying on U.S. citizens without a warrant.<sup>5</sup>

In a report issued on January 18, Human Rights Watch stated that “In the course of 2005, it became indisputable that U.S. mistreatment of detainees reflected not a failure of training, discipline or oversight, but a deliberate policy choice. . . . The problem could not be reduced to a few bad apples at the bottom of the barrel.”

As U.S. Citizens For Peace we consider it our right and responsibility to protest the occupation in Iraq and the systematic propagation of violence throughout the world. All members of the press are invited to document this event, and all who identify as nonviolent US Citizens for Peace are welcome to participate.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Soldiers reported killed – since the war began (3/19/03): **2317** with **1860** of those in combat. <http://www.antiwar.com/casualties/index.php#us>

<sup>2</sup> Civilians reported killed – Minimum **33,710** and Maximum **37,832** See <http://www.iraqbodycount.net/>

<sup>3</sup> British Medical Journal Lancet estimates **100,000** civilians have been killed.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer. “U.S. Airstrikes Take Toll on Civilians,” *Washington Post*, Saturday, Dec. 24, 2005, p. A01, online version. “The American air war inside Iraq today is perhaps the most significant—and underreported—aspect of the fight against the insurgency.” Seymour M. Hersch, “Up in the Air,” *The New Yorker*, Dec. 5, 2005, pp. 42ff., at 44. “The 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing alone had dropped more than five hundred thousand tons of ordnance” in the first 18 months of the war, according to a Marine press release. Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> “What we do know about this pervasive wiretapping virtually compels the conclusion that the president of the United States has been breaking the law repeatedly and insistently.” Al Gore, speech on Mon. Jan. 16. “The issue, simply put, is that for more than four years, the executive branch has been wiretapping many thousands of American citizens without warrants in direct contradiction of American law.” Al Gore, statement released Jan. 17.