

# How To Avoid A War?

## Saddam Must Step Down to Save Peace

H A R U N   Y A H Y A

The preparations for the United States' planned military operation against Iraq are moving full-speed ahead. It seems that unless something happens to reduce the tension between the United States and Iraq, there will be war in the Middle East. Inevitably, that war will cost the lives of tens of thousands of people and will lead to the deaths of innocent civilians. Many soldiers from the U.S. and Iraqi armies will be killed, and their families will suffer terribly. Unless war is prevented, great harm will be wreaked on the economies of the countries in the region, of which Turkey is a part, and particularly that of Iraq. Poverty and all the difficulties that stem from it will increase.

There is no doubt that the prevention of this approaching disaster, the avoidance of war and the finding of a peaceful solution, is the hope and desire of every person of good conscience. In fact, many individuals and civil society organizations all over the world are today saying "No to war" and encouraging their own governments to take initiatives to prevent such a clash. A wide community and many opinion formers within the United States maintain that the problem needs to be resolved by peaceful means.

Yet all these demands for peace need to be backed up by a concrete solution. Let us first briefly examine the present situation with a view to finding such a solution.

1. It is clear that following the September 11 terrorist attacks, the United States entered a state of alarm, declared war on terrorism and those administrations it perceived as being connected to it, and is totally determined on the issue.
2. After the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the main target in this war was set out as Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Even if there is room for debate whether Saddam Hussein really has built nuclear or chemical weapons, that regime is now firmly on the U.S. administration's black list, and it does not appear possible that this can change.
3. Unless there is a radical change in the present situation, the United States will strike at Iraq. The decision has long since been taken.

What is noteworthy here is the fact that the United States has gone on the offensive not against Iraq but against Saddam Hussein's regime in that country. As President Bush and other officials have repeatedly stressed, Saddam's administration has to come to an end. For that reason, **the most realistic formula to preventing war is for Saddam's administration to end before the war starts. The only way for that to happen is for Saddam Hussein to step down before the onset of war.**

## SADDAM HUSSEIN MUST STEP DOWN FROM POWER

In order for this formula to come about, the United States and the international community have to put forward a plan that is acceptable to Saddam Hussein. There is one point in particular that must not be ignored: that is the fact that Saddam Hussein has a wife and children, a family. In all probability he is not at all happy with the situation facing his country and people. Yet he may be unable to arrive at a healthy decision on account of concerns for his own and his family's safety. For that reason, if that safety is guaranteed, then it is clear that Saddam Hussein will have no wish to see a terrible slaughter that will cost tens of thousands of Arab lives. In that light, the following elements must be included in the plan that needs to be put to Saddam Hussein:

1. Saddam Hussein must be allowed to **leave Iraq and settle in a friendly Arab country**, in security and with certain assets. It must be guaranteed that he will be able to spend the rest of his life in comfort in that Arab country
2. Following Saddam Hussein's abdication, a **technocratic government** consisting of moderate and independent figures must be set up in Iraq. That government must react positively to the international community's demands for disarmament, and must seek a solution to the urgent problems facing the country. The embargo and sanctions against Iraq must be lifted, and with assistance from the international community a regeneration programme must

quickly be initiated. The suffering of the Iraqi people, who have lived in terrible misery and poverty ever since the 1980s, must be brought to an end as a matter of urgency.

**3.** The necessary legal and institutional changes must be brought in to allow Iraq to become a **democratic state of law**. A constitutional order that respects the rights of all ethnic and religious groups living in the country, and that allows them to live together under one roof in peace in security must be established. Later still, **free elections** must be held, and Iraq must take its place in the world as a respected member of the community of nations.

If Saddam Hussein takes the common sense approach and prevents war by stepping down, then he will have done the people of Iraq one of the greatest services possible, and will go down in history as a hero. We need to be aware that according to Islam, the greatest heroism lies in winning the "Great Jihad" (*Jihad al-Nafs*), in other words in conquering one's own desires. Power is a desire that is hard for many people to forsake. A leader who foregoes power for the sake of the safety and happiness of his people thus wins that "Great Jihad" and behaves in the most honorable manner possible.

For this reason:

## **WE CALL ON SADDAM HUSSEIN:**

If you step down from power and leave Iraq, you will have prevented a war that would cost the lives of thousands, tens of thousands of Iraqis. Babies and defenseless women and old people who would otherwise have died under the bombs will be saved. Your cities will not be razed and your country will not be ruined. You will prevent the people of Iraq from suffering a terrible disaster for the sake of a war that cannot possibly be won.

Please make that sacrifice... Then the world will regard you not as a leader who led his people to death and suffering, but as one who gave up everything for their sake.

Even more importantly, there is no doubt that such behavior will please God. In the Qur'an, God reveals that saving just one person from death is as much a good deed as saving all of mankind:

**...If someone kills another person-unless it is in retaliation for someone else or for causing corruption in the earth-it is as if he had murdered all mankind. And if anyone gives life to another person, it is as if he had given life to all mankind... (Qur'an, 5:32)**

If you allow the war to be prevented, you will have saved not one life but thousands.

We must not forget that the outbreak of war on earth is displeasing to God. We are told in the Qur'an that war is a great evil, that it represents corruption, and that God does not love corruption. (Qur'an, 5:64) In another verse, God calls all people to peace:

**O You who believe! Enter absolutely into peace (Islam). Do not follow in the footsteps of Satan. He is an outright enemy to you. (Qur'an, 2:208)**

In short, supporting peace and bringing it about is a great duty of all Muslims.

## **WE CALL ON THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION**

The divine principles that should guide the Iraqi administration must do the same for the U.S. administration.

President Bush is a religious man. He has frequently and sincerely stated his belief in God and the Bible, the Christians' holy book. For that reason, we believe that he, and all religious people in the administration, will carefully consider those passages from the Bible that command peace amongst men.

For instance, the Gospel according to St. Matthew says, **"Blessed are the peacemakers." (Matthew, 5: 9)**

The following quotations command all Christians to love their enemies, pray for their improvement, to be forgiving

and not to seek revenge:

**Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew, 5: 44)**

**If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves... If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink. (Romans, 12: 18-20)**

There are also passages in the Old Testament, the guide for both Christians and Jews, that command peace amongst men. One such passage reads, **"by the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil. 7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."** (Proverbs, 16: 6-7) In other words, he who follows God's path forgives his enemies.

President Bush is sincerely devoted to the moral values of the Holy Book. His words in his address to the nation on September 11, 2002, **"Our deepest national conviction is that every life is precious, because every life is the gift of a Creator who intended us to live in liberty and equality."** are a clear statement of this. The entire world hopes that he will bring his common sense and conscience to bear on the subject of the Iraq in the most effective manner.

If there is war between Iraq and the United States, many innocent people will die. Innocent Iraqi children, women and old people will die under the bombs, or be crippled and suffer, and a whole nation will drown in pain. The Iraqi Army will suffer terrible casualties, and those dead soldiers will leave orphans and widows behind them. The American Army will also suffer casualties, leaving weeping families in their wake, and American servicemen will be condemned to all sorts of sorrows, thousands of miles from home, in a land they do not know.

How and why should anyone choose disaster when there is a peaceful way?

## **NO TO A WAR OF PRIDE**

The element that needs to be observed if peace is to be established is the **positive, rather than negative use of psychological factors**. If, for example, America uses language that provokes Saddam Hussein and causes Iraqi disarmament to become a matter of pride for Saddam Hussein, the problem will continue to escalate. Many **wars of pride** have broken out in the past. There must not be another.

On the other hand, it is a terrible mistake for certain circles to use the kind of language that will provoke president Bush and the U.S. administration and thus prepare the groundwork for a question of pride. Neither President Bush, nor the current administration nor the American state have any need to engage in a show of power or determination. The calming down of emotions heightened by the mutual use of provocative statements and the adoption of a rational approach by both sides are of great importance to a solution.

**The Baghdad regime, on the other hand, must understand and respect the United States' sensitivities.** America was subjected to the world's worst ever terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, in which thousands of innocent Americans lost their lives. America is perfectly justified in finding the perpetrators of this attack, bringing them to justice, and preventing any repetition of similar terrorist incidents. For that reason, no government must take any action that provokes alarm in the United States, but must wholeheartedly help eliminate existing concerns. If the United States is concerned that Iraq might support various terrorist actions in the near future or pose a threat to the United States and its allies in the region by producing chemical and nuclear weapons, then Iraq needs to do all in its power to do away with those concerns. Iraq will not be diminished by proving it is not involved in a threatening activity. Quite the opposite. It will earn the appreciation and confidence of the international community and its neighbors.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF WAR CANNOT BE PREVENTED?**

If war cannot be prevented by means of the formula we have put forward here or by some other means, then the ensuing developments will be most unfortunate:

1) **Deaths:** If a wide-ranging operation begins as planned, this will inevitably lead to a great many deaths. Iraqi

troops, Iraqi civilians and American troops will die, and others will be crippled.

2) **The Destruction of Iraq:** It appears inescapable that a land and air operation against Baghdad will result in serious physical damage to the city and other settlements of strategic importance. The Iraqi economy is already in collapse, and a strike against the capital and important facilities will wreak the kind of damage it will take decades to put right.

3) **The Danger of Civil War:** If the Baghdad regime is overthrown, a struggle for power will begin between the different religious and ethnic minorities in the country, and that might lead, in turn, to a bloody civil war. The repetition in Iraq of the civil war in Lebanon during the 1970s and '80s, which caused so much bloodshed, is a disaster that looks likely to be repeated.

4) **The Fragmentation of Iraq:** Another likely development after the war is the fragmentation of Iraq in a framework of ethnic and religious minorities. Such a fragmentation would lead to fighting between those minorities and also give rise to exceedingly powerless, poor and uncontrolled tiny states, which would inevitably fall into anarchy and chaos. Furthermore, these tiny states that would probably emerge could also have the effect of destabilizing Iraq's neighbors. This is what gives rise to Turkey's justified concern in the face of the danger represented by a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq. Not just Turkey, but other neighboring and Gulf states, such as Iran, Syria and Jordan would also be harmed by the confusion in Iraq.

5) **Economic Difficulties in the Region:** It is estimated that in the 11 years since the 1991 Gulf War, Turkey has suffered an economic loss of more than \$100 billion. A new war would put an end to commercial life in the region and deal a deadly blow to tourism, and there would be recession and losses in all other sectors of the economy.

6) **Increased Danger of a "Clash of Civilizations."** A potential war between Iraq and the United States would represent an opportunity for those who wish to encourage a bloody conflict between the Western and Islamic civilizations. Protests against the war will come from all over the Islamic world, and that will serve the purposes of the scenario aimed at bringing the United States against the Islamic world. A peaceful solution in the face of this problem will lead the way to the world peace and security necessary for the **"Peace of Civilizations."**

Our hope is the prevention of a war in Iraq, a solution to the problem without bloodshed, and the Middle East becoming a region where peace and friendship prevail over conflict.