

**INVITATION TO ENDORSE THE  
INITIATIVE TO CONVENE AN  
INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL**

The working group formed at the Networks' conference organized by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation in Brussels on 26/27 June, 2003, discussed the idea and possibilities of convening an international tribunal to investigate and establish the crimes perpetrated against the people of Iraq and humanity, and to question the US policies & doctrines setting the framework for aggression and establish whether they in themselves constitute violations of international law and to hold the US regime and its accomplices to account for the violation of humanitarian and international laws and values.

After discussing the various proposals and ideas, a general consensus was reached that all proposals could be combined under the umbrella of that coming from Turkey and we could move on taking this as our starting point. The group in Turkey was entrusted with the task of acting as the secretariat and clearing house, carrying out the coordination in close contact with the groups in Brussels, Japan, the US, UK, and others. The group was also asked, as a first step, to communicate the project and the results to the participating persons and organizations as well as to others who might be interested. It is in this capacity that we are writing you this letter.

Based on the feedback from other organizations, we will be coordinating a working meeting of all participants (planned for late September-early October) where everything will be finalized. We expect the coordinating group to expand there with working participants from other regions.

The general idea was to hold an independent international tribunal with commissions of investigation holding preliminary hearings in various countries culminating in a tribunal in Istanbul.

In this context, we are inviting you to join in this effort. Below you will find the details of the results of this working group meeting and an appeal.

Attached are the text of the proposal that we will be taking as our starting point and the draft for main headlines of issues to be investigated.

With our best wishes and in solidarity,

Ayşe Berktaş  
on behalf of Coordinating Group for International Tribunal

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The US administration and its accomplices have attacked and occupied Iraq.

- This act of aggression was carried out in blatant defiance of the overwhelming opposition of the world public and the unprecedented peace movement, which rose all over the world.
- Furthermore, it has gravely undermined the UN system itself and international laws and mechanisms designed to protect and promote peace.
- The US doctrines of "pre-emptive war" and "full spectrum dominance" put into practice in total disregard even for all international norms and mechanisms to which the US itself is a party, constitute a threat to world peace in general and an immediate threat to peace in the Middle East in particular.
- As a follow up of this policy, the US has openly declared its intention to re-design the Middle Eastern map. We are heading towards a new world-scale war for control over energy resources, a new war for hegemony.

The act of aggression against Iraq and the current occupation is of pivotal importance in that it threatens to set a precedent when considered in the above-mentioned context – the policy on which it rises and the basic international norms it has deliberately violated and rendered ineffective through the violation itself. Under these conditions, the world public needs to create its alternative mechanisms to uphold and defend these values that are dear to all of us.

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One very powerful way of achieving this is to hold an international tribunal, which will examine the whole process and bring to light the crimes and violations committed by the forces of aggression and occupation. And it will fulfill the historic task of recording facts and the whole truth, ensuring that they are inscribed in the collective memory of humanity and always remembered.

The idea of having an international tribunal was in principle supported at the Anti-War Meetings in Berlin and Geneva. The Jakarta Peace Consensus made a declaration committing itself to the realization of this. Taking one more step further, we elaborated on the idea of how this could materialize and took the idea for discussion and support to the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation's Networks' Conference in Brussels on 26/27 June. There was a special workshop with great enthusiasm (about 40 participants) and broad participation on the topic. There were prior proposals from Turkey, Belgium and Japan.

- ❖ **In Turkey:** Those of us working towards the realization of an international tribunal formed a working group / platform concentrating on this subject. This working group enjoys the support of all the various sectors of the anti-war and peace movement in Turkey: No to War in Iraq Coordination, The Peace Initiative of Turkey and the Peace and Justice Coalition.

The idea was very briefly:

- To convene an international tribunal to hold the US and UK regimes to account for the crimes perpetrated against the people of Iraq and humanity and for the violation of humanitarian and international norms and values.
- To turn this into a worldwide campaign, holding preliminary hearings in different countries and the final tribunal in Istanbul – Turkey.
- The grave accusations directed at the US&UK, when studied, can be grouped under some main titles. The examination and investigation of each of these titles or sub-titles shall be undertaken by different committees of

investigation. And around each one of these one (or more if needed) preliminary hearings shall be held.

- ❖ **In Belgium:** A platform of cultural institutions and intellectuals was formed to implement the idea of convening a people's tribunal of academics, intellectuals and artists against the war in Iraq and the imperial war policies of the Bush II administration. Main focus was specified as the "Project for the New American Century", the think tank behind this new war and three of the co-signers of the mission statement: Rumsfeld, Cheney and Wolfowitz. The accusation was provisionally formulated as follows: the Project for the New American Century and its members, especially the key figures of the PNAC in the Bush War Cabinet, have been preaching, planning and executing crimes against international law and against humanity.

- ❖ **In Japan:** 10 organisations and 250 individuals (representing over 4,000 people) got together to form a platform: Action Indict Bush-Blair. They are exploring all possible avenues to respond to the massive breaches of international norms and law seen in West Asia. Their representative presented a detailed paper listing and analyzing the preliminary evidence on the various war crimes committed in Iraq. The paper deals with various types of war crimes, as well as with crimes against humanity (such as the use of banned uranium weapons, cluster bombs and other WMD) and the 12-years of genocidal sanctions. The latter evidence contains among others the public admittance by high US officials, the incriminating evidence of a deliberately planned mass murder in the form of declassified documents produced by US secret services as well as reports written on behalf of various UN organizations. The report gives a list of recommendations.

In the meeting there were contributions from the US, the Czech Republic, Germany, Sweden, UK, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Denmark and others.

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### The proposals all got together as follows:

1. Participants endorsed the idea of holding an independent international tribunal to investigate and expose the crimes perpetrated against the people of Iraq and humanity by the US regime and its accomplices and to denounce the attempt of the US government to impose a new imperial order, with focus on Iraq as the most recent and blatant instance of this militaristic war logic, which constitutes a turning point.
2. To this end, we shall have a tribunal consisting of preliminary hearings in different countries, culminating in a final Tribunal in Istanbul.
3. The Istanbul Group will do the Tribunal coordination work and shall be the clearing house and shall set up such an office. Information will flow there and shall be sent out to all involved.
4. Preliminary hearings planned to start on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004 and the final tribunal in Istanbul to open on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004.
5. It is politically important that the preliminary hearings start out in New York. US organizations are invited to go for it and to take up the challenge. (initial steps taken – pending confirmation)
6. Brussels and Hiroshima have already volunteered to hold two of the preliminary hearings. And we envisage this as a broad networking event, in which other regions, other initiatives and other meetings will participate.

### 7. WE ASK ALL POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS OF THE TRIBUNAL WORK:

- a. To get endorsements from their organizations and to send us confirmation to: [ayseberktay@superonline.com](mailto:ayseberktay@superonline.com)
  - b. To provide names & contacts of people who should be part of the Tribunal (people of merit who have contributed to the collective treasury of humanity through their intellectual, scientific, artistic or physical work, activism, people / groups directly affected by the policies of aggression. Internationally credible, respectable people who would in a way be the embodiment of the conscience of our world. Journalists, witnesses ... )
  - c. To provide names and contacts of people and/or organizations with expertise in the field we are investigating. There are many local campaigns focusing on certain aspects of the aggression. Let us build on these.
  - d. To prepare for financial contribution and/or come up with concrete suggestions towards the financial aspect of the realization of this goal.
8. The Initiative in Turkey shall coordinate a meeting of all participants from the international arena after getting the above feedback and confirmations. The meeting shall be sometime in late September – early October. **We expect the Tribunal Coordination to expand after this meeting to**

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**include working members from different parts of the world.**

9. Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation declares its support to this initiative and asks its supporters to give the cause all the support they can give. The Lelio Basso Foundation has been approached in order to consider the Independent International Criminal Tribunal to be made part of the Permanent People's Tribunals, to incorporate their modus operandi or to be jointly organized under the guidance of the LBF.

Please send all questions and comments to:  
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212 244 73 70

Until September, we will be getting feedback, discussing and further developing various aspects of the issue with the present participants. We will be building name-contact lists, deciding on logo, name, going ahead with organization of local campaigns. Contacting people. Working to clarify preliminary hearing sites: which topic to which site.

At the international meeting of all those willing to take part in this all these will be finalized. And an international declaration shall be made announcing the tribunal. After that, we shall start sending out invitations to people to take part in the tribunal. In order to be able to fulfil all the tasks expected of the Coordination, we shall most probably need to expand the coordinating group to include working members from other parts of the world. At this meeting there will be time for this expanded group to meet, plan and divide chores.

All organizations willing to participate in the effort and to make this one of the primary issues on their agendas are invited to contact us soon.

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## Appendix 1 :

### THE TRIBUNAL

#### Elements:

- 1) **Tribunal Board**: Will make a final evaluation after hearing the witnesses, testimonies, the reports of the investigation commission and the evaluation reports from the jury. Shall conduct and preside the sessions. Shall see to it that all the procedures, investigations and processes are carried out in an orderly and just manner. Shall be responsible for making sure that the tribunal is a process where justice prevails.  
(This also includes making sure that the rights of defendants are respected and looked after even if they are not present, that the process is a fair one.) A member representing the Board shall attend preliminary sessions and demand further investigation or further evidence when needed. Shall see to it that credibility is achieved and investigation is thorough. Consists of an Honorary President, Executive President, Vice-President and secretary. (The membership could be increased to 7-8 to include one person from each continent.)
- 2) **Commission of investigation**: In charge of carrying out the investigation. Each of the commission members specializes on one aspect of the investigation and has a sub-committee working with him/her. Consults with the Tribunal Board and the Tribunal Coordination in specifying the areas of investigation. Shall hold preliminary sessions on the areas they investigate (the subtitles). Shall arrange talks to witnesses, testimonies, collect evidence, ask for and get reports from experts, send people to Iraq to report on the situation. Make all reports and evidence available to jury and tribunal board. Present detailed reports on preliminary sessions to relevant jury members. Prepare a final report for their respective areas for the final session.
- 3) **Jury**: Intellectuals, activists, groups harmed by the investigated practices and policies, world renowned and respected jurists, people from all six continents with representative capacity. They will divide into specialized groups in line with the main groups of issues under investigation. They will have access to all reports and to the final reports to be presented to the final session. After the hearings and final presentation by the commission of investigation, a spokesperson of each group shall present an evaluation report.
- 4) **Witnesses, reporters, testimonies**: Witnesses will appear before preliminary sessions and/or final session. Reporters may be persons or institutions. They will report to the commission of investigation. They may appear before preliminary sessions and/or final session.
- 5) **Tribunal Coordination** : Shall be in charge of the actual realization and implementation of the tribunal. Shall be entrusted with the tasks of facilitating communication between all components, taking care of visibility in the press, organizing flow of information to the press, organizing flow of information to campaign coordination, keeping in touch with campaign coordination to evaluate the overall impact of the work being done. Shall carry out the tasks given by the Tribunal Board.
- 6) **Campaign Coordination**: Shall be entrusted with the task of coordinating with various peace and anti-war movements to publicize the tribunal proceedings in each and every country. Shall be in contact with the Tribunal Coordination. It shall be set up with the contribution of international peace movements and social forums.