

# **united** for **peace & justice**

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## **Statement from Leslie Cagan National Coordinator, United for Peace and Justice**

As the National Coordinator of United for Peace and Justice, I am here today representing the nation's largest antiwar coalition, which includes more than 1,400 national organizations and local groups.

United for Peace and Justice has been working to build the Declaration of Peace activities throughout the nation this week. For three and a half years the Bush Administration, with the support of the United States Congress, has been carrying out an immoral and illegal war and occupation in Iraq. This is a war that never should have happened, a war based on lies. There were no weapons of mass destruction, there was no connection to Al-Qaeda or the horrific events of Sept. 11, 2001, and Iraq posed no threat to our nation.

The U.S. military operation in Iraq is now just about as long as our country's involvement in World War II. Nearly 2,700 U.S. servicepeople have died in this war. And estimates are that at least 45,000 Iraqi civilians have died. Iraq is in ruins with a devastated economy, health care and educational systems not functioning and daily violence taking the lives of innocent people. Our government has spent well over \$300 billion dollars on this war, money that should have been spent rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, money urgently needed in communities throughout this nation.

Since before the war started, people around the world and in this country said no, this war must not happen, this war must end. We have marched in large numbers – indeed, in some of the largest demonstrations ever seen in the U.S. We have lobbied Congress; held vigils and protests in every corner of the country; pressured the media to tell the real story about this war; passed resolutions in city councils, in labor unions and in religious institutions; gathered signatures on petitions and pledges; and so much more.

Today, here in front of the White House, we kick off a week of intensive antiwar action throughout the nation. In cities big and small, people will be gathering in vigils and marches. They will visit their elected representatives. And in many places, antiwar activists will risk arrest as they participate in acts of nonviolent civil disobedience and civil resistance. In fact, I, and others here today, will risk arrest as we attempt to deliver our message to the White House.

United for Peace and Justice, working with many of our member groups and other organizations, is proud to be part of this historic campaign, the Declaration of Peace. We will continue to build this movement, and we will continue to encourage and help organize nonviolent civil disobedience and resistance to this outrageous war. It is time to end the war in Iraq. It is time to bring all of the troops home!

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