

PROK position on dispatch of Korean troops to Iraq

Having earlier officially declared PROK opposition to the war in Iraq, the 88th General Assembly of the PROK in September 2003 issued a statement opposing the dispatch of Korean troops to Iraq. This was followed in turn by a further declaration issued at a PROK prayer meeting and public demonstration near the American Embassy in Seoul on December 4, 2003. We print the latter here:

We Oppose the Dispatch of Korean Troops to the Unjust US War in Iraq

"Live peacefully with all" (Romans 12:18)

The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), following Jesus Christ who came to this earth as the King of Peace, has been continually struggling and prying to build peace and achieve reconciliation among all humanity.

At its 88th General Assembly (2003) the PROK proclaimed that the US war against Iraq was indisputably an invasive, murderous war led by a hegemonic superpower. In addition, the PROK emphasized that supporting the war was a sin before God, and declared our strong opposition to the plan to dispatch Korean troops to Iraq.

We reaffirm in this statement that the war against Iraq was caused by US hegemony. Iraq has become a testing ground for US-made sophisticated weapons of mass destruction, and countless innocent civilians in Iraq have been killed by indiscriminate attacks.

We reassert that the US war in Iraq is an unjust invasion, and clearly declare our position as follows.

1. The US must stop the unjustifiable war in Iraq and withdraw all US troops from Iraq.

Since US President Bush announced the official end of the war, US troops have been continuously stationed in Iraq to more directly pursue US interests. Contrary to the positive expectations of US military experts, the situation of Iraq has not improved at all since the official end of the war. Rather, the general situation of Iraq has only worsened, resulting in more innocent victims. In the course of this situation, two civilians from Korea, which has decided to dispatch more troops to Iraq, were recently killed in Iraq. Any kinds of terrorist activities targeting innocent civilians are totally unacceptable. However, we are seeing a greater terrorist slaughter of civilians than

the terrorism being carried out by Iraqi insurgents. And that is the terrorism by the US. Complaints against the US are mounting and the resultant increase in terrorist activities is claiming more innocent lives. Terrorist activities targeting US troops are being extended to target US allies. Recognizing that the war was unjust from the beginning, anti-war groups around the world are strongly urging the US to withdraw from Iraq immediately.

Thinking of the future of Iraq, we believe that Iraq must be given the right to establish its own democratic government under UN supervision. The US-led initiative to establish the Iraqi government will not serve the Iraqi people but only meet US interests. Therefore, we strongly urge the withdrawal of US troops so that the Iraqi people may rebuild their country on their own with the support of the UN.

2. The US must withdraw its request for the dispatch of Korean troops.

The US is requesting its allies to dispatch more troops in order to lessen its heavy burden of the war which it started. Seeing the US shameless intent to drag other countries into its unjustifiable invasion of Iraq, we can not but doubt that the US is a peace-seeking country. Seeing this so-called freedom-guarding country oppress the freedom of other countries, we can not but doubt that this is a country which believes in Christ and regards life as precious and works to build peace in this world.

We strongly urge the US to withdraw its audacious, irrational request for the dispatch of Korean troops to share its sin of the imperialistic invasion of Iraq.

3. The Korean government must reject the US request for Korean troops.

During the Vietnam War, Korea inflicted pain on the Vietnamese people, and we are still suffering from the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Now our country is going to make the same mistake. We are dismayed to see the Korean government trying to pursue its national interest through killing innocent civilians in another country. We are dismayed by the report made by the National Assembly fact-finding mission to Iraq. Listening to their report that the dispatch of Korean combat troops to Iraq would be a wise decision, we are enraged that these are the spokesmen of the Korean people. Where is the spirit of our Constitution, to "work diligently for world peace and repudiate all wars of aggression"? We will closely observe what the government and parliamentarians, who claim they are safeguarding the Constitution, decide in relation to the unjust war against Iraq.

We insist that the government must not dispatch Korean combat or non-combat troops to Iraq. We call on the Korean government to decisively reject the US request and to strongly uphold the sovereignty of our country.

December 4, 2003
Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea