

Voices for Creative Nonviolence

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Dear Friends,

From Amman, Jordan, Kathy Kelly wrote the following in early July:

A few days ago, on the night of my arrival in Amman, Jordan, an Iraqi friend who is here for desperately needed cancer treatment, surprised me by asking, "Is it true, Kathy, there is a woman in the United States, she will take Bush's place and she will send all the U.S. army home, every one of them?" I must have looked baffled. "Yes!" she insisted. Her infectious smile brightened the drab room, as she eagerly nodded her head. "We heard this. If it is true, we will vote for her!"

Knowing my friend would be hospitalized the next morning, I wanted her to continue feeling hopeful about the future. I murmured something about changing circumstances in the U.S. My friend's survival depends on several rounds of chemotherapy, treatment which should have been administered a year ago. The health care she needs is unavailable in Iraq, so her family sold their home and she risked her life getting to Amman. How strange that my brave Iraqi friend might benefit from optimism, however misplaced it may be, derived from the rhetoric of an aspiring U.S. presidential candidate.

Those of us who don't bear the sickening and frightening realities of life in Iraq bear a crucial responsibility to refute comforting and naive hopes invested in any U.S. elected official who refuses to cut funding for the war. My friend has seen her country ravaged by U.S. sanctions, her city turned into a battlefield. This young mother of three longs for an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Who wouldn't find some glimmer of hope in removing from office those who, in 2003, dared to declare, "Mission Accomplished." But it's not enough to simply hold President Bush Sr. or President Bush Jr. or any presidential administration accountable. The U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives must also be held responsible and, by extension, the U.S. voters themselves.

It's difficult, perhaps unimaginable, for people running for public office to forego the perceived security of being in bed with major corporations in the defense lobby and the oil industry, all of whom benefit from ongoing war in Iraq. It's unnerving and uncomfortable for U.S. leaders to devise new strategies that likewise challenge privileged elites in the Middle East who also benefit from the proxy wars being fought in Iraq.

Nevertheless, we must continue vigorous efforts to educate the U.S. public about the terrifying consequences of relying on the U.S. military and its vast network of "security" groups to steer policies in Iraq. We must further insist that the U.S. use its resources to honestly contribute toward reconstruction in Iraq and reparations for the grievous suffering we've caused.

These extremely difficult steps are necessary if we prefer not to be identified as an imperial menace, terrifying other people by use of overwhelming threat and force. One of the most indispensable steps for us to take, now, involves making our voices heard while the Senate and the House of Representatives deliberate over the next supplemental spending bill.

My friend, who now languishes in a hospital bed, referred to "this woman" who could bring all of the troops home. No, we cannot turn to "this woman," or "that man." We must arouse vast multitudes of women and men across the U.S., willing to work, assiduously, to call off the battles, to bring the troops home and then seek creation

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of environs, in Iraq and beyond, wherein peaceful development can take root.

Thank you for your help in enabling Kathy, Dan, Cathy Breen and other Voices members to live amongst Iraqis who've been displaced in Jordan and Syria. Please join Voices for Creative Nonviolence in efforts to organize the next round of the Occupation Project. We send this newsletter with deepest thanks and admiration for the careful, steady and determined efforts that have taken place so far. Let's equip ourselves with resolute determination to nonviolently resist "endless war" and to pointedly insist that U.S. legislators end funding for this war.

August 2007 - Scott Blackburn, Joel Gullede, Laurie Hasbrook, Jeff Leys, Kathy Kelly, Gerald Paoli, Dan Pearson



Announcing SODaPOP Seasons of Discontent: A Presidential Occupation Project

Nonviolent Civil Resistance During the Presidential Campaign

Voices for Creative Nonviolence and our allies in Iowa and New Hampshire are in the initial stages of organizing a campaign of nonviolent civil resistance focused upon those who would be President.

Seasons of Discontent: A Presidential Occupation Project (SODaPOP) will launch this fall, sometime in October, and will last through the Iowa caucus on January 14 and the New Hampshire primary on January 22.

While the demands of the campaign are still being finalized, the initial concept is to occupy the campaign headquarters and offices of Presidential candidates who do not commit to:

- Complete withdrawal of the U.S. military forces from Iraq within 100 days of assuming the office of President of the United States (or May 2009).
- Complete halt to any and all military actions—including ground, air and naval--against Iraq and Iran.
- Full funding for the reconstruction of Iraq to repair the damage caused over these past 17 years of economic and military warfare that the U.S. and its allies waged against Iraq.

- Full funding for the Common Good in the U.S.—to rebuild our education and health care systems; to create jobs training programs for jobs that pay a living wage; to provide universal health care for all; to rebuild our country's inner cities and rural communities; and to initiate a campaign on the scale of a new Tennessee Valley Authority and Rural Electrification Project of the Great Depression era to create affordable, safe and sustainable alternative forms of energy and energy consumption; and for other vital social programs.
- Full funding for the highest quality health care, education and jobs training benefits for veterans of our country's Armed Services.

For those Presidential candidates who currently hold a seat in the House or Senate, we set forth the following additional demand:

- Vote against any additional funding for the Iraq war other than those funds that are essential to fund the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.
- Publicly commit to oppose the use of U.S. military forces against Iran.

Join us in Iowa and New Hampshire for the Seasons of Our Discontent: Presidential Occupation Project. Join us in these two critical states for weekly, if not daily, acts of nonviolent civil resistance / civil disobedience to seek a redirection of our country's policies and to bring about an end to the Iraq war.

We especially invite you to join us in Iowa and New Hampshire beginning January 1 for concentrated nonviolent action in the days leading up to the Iowa caucus on January 14 and to the New Hampshire primary on January 22. We travel to Washington, D.C. for national actions all the time. Now is the time to travel to Iowa, the heart of our country's heartland, and to New Hampshire, our country's Granite State, to seek an end to the Iraq war.

Please be in contact with us about joining this very critical campaign of nonviolent direct action, civil resistance and civil disobedience. You may reach us via Voices for Creative Nonviolence at 773-878-3815 or via email at info@vcnv.org



Iraq – Afghanistan War Funding – 2008

How much money is President Bush seeking for Fiscal Year 2008?

President Bush and the military are seeking \$145 billion to wage the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for Fiscal Year 2008 (\$142 billion is for the military and \$3 billion is for other agencies). He submitted this request on February 5. Already, the Army is talking about seeking even more funds than it originally requested to fund additional personnel costs and to procure MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicles. FY 2008 begins on October 1, 2007 and ends on September 30, 2008.

What will the money be used for?

\$17 billion will be for Personnel costs; \$73 billion for Operations and Maintenance costs; and \$36 billion for Procurement costs.

Procurement funds the acquisition of ammunition, vehicles, weapons systems, etc. over time. The funds will be available through September 30, 2010. Production schedules available on the Department of Defense website show that the earliest any item purchased with these funds will be delivered to the military is May 2008 (for 12 gauge shotgun ammunition). Vehicles and weapons systems won't be delivered to the military until 2009 at the earliest with production schedules running through 2010.

The acquisition of MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicles is an exception to the 1 to 3 year rule for procurement. The Department of Defense is accelerating the purchase and production of MRAPs for delivery to U.S. forces stationed in Iraq.

An extensive analysis of this \$145 billion war supplemental request is available on the Voices website. If you do not have access to the web, please call us at 773-878-3815 and we'll be happy to send you a copy.

When will Congress vote on this war supplemental?

Congress should vote on the war supplemental sometime after September 15. It is not known when in September the vote will take place, and it may not take place until early October. General Petraeus will

report to Congress by Sept. 15 on the progress (or lack thereof) being made in the "surge" and towards Iraq's achievement of the "benchmarks" established by Congress.

What reports are due to Congress this fall?

The Bush Administration is required to submit three reports to Congress in August and September.

By September 1, the U.S. Comptroller General will submit a report assessing the progress of Iraq towards meeting the benchmarks set forth by Congress in the May war supplemental.

By September 15, General Petraeus will testify before Congress to assess progress on the benchmarks.

By September 25, an independent third party (Center for Strategic and International Studies) will report on "The readiness of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to assume responsibility for maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq, denying international terrorists a safe haven, and bringing greater security to Iraq's 18 provinces in the next 12 to 18 months, and bringing an end to sectarian violence to achieve national reconciliation."

What is H.R. 2451 – The Obey – McGovern Bill?

H.R. 2451 will be considered as an amendment to the FY 2008 war supplemental spending bill. It provides for the partial redeployment of U.S. military forces and defense contractors out of Iraq. This partial redeployment will begin within 90 days of enactment of the bill and be completed by June 30, 2008.

What is meant by "partial redeployment"?

H.R. 2451 contains the following qualifying language which makes it a partial redeployment of Armed Forces out of Iraq:

"(d) Authority To Retain Armed Forces in Iraq for Limited Purposes- The Secretary of Defense may retain in Iraq members of the Armed Forces for the purpose of providing security for the United States Embassy and other United States diplomatic missions in Iraq; protecting American citizens, including members of the Armed Forces; serving in roles consistent with customary diplomatic positions; engaging in targeted

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special actions limited in duration and scope to killing or capturing members of al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations with global reach; and training and equipping members of the Iraqi Security Forces. At the request of the Government of Iraq, the Secretary of Defense may retain in Iraq members of the Army Corps of Engineers and defense contractors engaged in reconstruction projects in Iraq, to the extent necessary to complete such projects."

How many troops would remain in Iraq under H.R. 2451, if it passes?

The Pentagon estimates that 60,000 U.S. troops would remain in Iraq using language similar to H.R. 2451 (according to an MSNBC report of July 16).

What can be done to defeat the 2008 Iraq – Afghanistan war supplemental?

Plan now to go to your Representative's and Senators' offices to demand that they vote against any additional funding for the Iraq war. Visit their offices regardless of whether or not they agree to set up a meeting with you. If they hesitate to set up a meeting, tell the office the date that you and your colleagues will be there, show up and demand that they meet with you then and there. Be prepared to go on a daily or weekly basis to press the demand.

Starting August 6, the Occupation Project campaign launched a reinvigorated phase of the campaign. The Occupation Project is a campaign of nonviolent civil resistance / civil disobedience and nonviolent direct action focused upon Representatives and Senators who refuse to publicly commit to voting against any additional funding for the Iraq war. Launched on February 5, 2007, over the next 10 weeks over 320 arrests occurred in the offices of 39 Reps and Senators in a sustained campaign of civil disobedience nationwide. 15 of these Reps and Senators voted against the final version of the Iraq war supplemental in May of this year (14 of the 15 had voted in favor of the war supplemental in 2006). During this same period, sustained office occupations not resulting in arrests occurred on a weekly and daily basis in such diverse places as Tennessee, California, Washington and Huntsville, Alabama. Local Occupation Project campaigns took place from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon and from Fairbanks, Alaska to Huntsville, Alabama.

Organize locally with the Occupation Project campaign (www.vcnv.org or call 773-878-3815) and / or the Declaration of Peace campaign (www.declarationofpeace.org), a close ally in the work to end the war.



Summer-Fall Actions to End Iraq War!

Voices for Creative Nonviolence urges you to plan to participate in one or more of the following efforts to end the war:

AUGUST 6 TO OCTOBER: THE OCCUPATION PROJECT

<http://vcnv.org/project/the-occupation-project>
Coordinated by Voices for Creative Nonviolence. A reinvigorated campaign of nonviolent civil resistance / civil disobedience to end Iraq war funding. Campaigns are currently being organized in over 15 states. This phase will continue through the vote on the FY 2008 Iraq - Afghanistan war funding bill sometime in late September or early October.

SEPTEMBER 14 TO 21 -- DECLARATION OF PEACE. DAYS OF DECISION.

<http://declarationofpeace.org>
A week of nationwide coordinated, dramatic nonviolent actions in every Congressional District across the United States to Defund the U.S. war on Iraq and to Establish a Comprehensive Peace Plan for Iraq.

SEPTEMBER 15 -- MARCH ON WASHINGTON, D.C.: END THE WAR NOW

<http://www.sept15.org>

SEPTEMBER 20 -- NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

<http://iraqpledge.org>
Nonviolent direct action (focused upon Congress) in Washington, D.C. to end the Iraq war.

OCTOBER 21 TO 23 -- NO WAR. NO WARMING

<http://nowarnowarming.org>
Join a global movement rising up against war and global warming by participating in a massive intervention in Washington DC or your own community.

OCTOBER 27 -- REGIONAL ANTIWAR

MOBILIZATIONS Save the date. Organized by United for Peace and Justice
<http://www.unitedforpeace.org>

Neglect and Projection

By Dan Pearson

July, 2007

Damascus, Syria

For my Iraqi neighbors living here in Yarmouk Camp, the Palestinian example is hardly an uplifting reminder that it could be a very long time before they can safely return to their homes and lands. But, they were lucky enough to escape the nightmare of U.S. freedom and democracy in Iraq, and at least there is usually electricity here and clean water to drink, so they try to put on a happy face. Yarmouk, one of the three most popular destinations for the estimated 2,000 Iraqis crossing into Syria every day, is a primarily Palestinian refugee camp on the outskirts of Damascus.

Countless Iraqis are hoping for a chance to gain asylum in any country that will take them. Enormous crowds spend entire days waiting just to get an appointment for an interview with the over-loaded UN Refugee Agency up to six months away. Those trying to stick it out here face a growing crisis; their visas do not allow them to work and the future is bleak. Although some of them have found work in the black market economy or as unskilled laborers, many others are praying that help will come before their meager savings run out. They dread having to join the throngs of other Iraqis begging in the streets.

Syria is stretched to the limit dealing with the crisis with little help from the international community. Official estimates claim that as of this month (July) there are between 1.4 or 2 million Iraqis in Syria, a number increasing by 30,000 every month. This sudden influx has put a tremendous strain on the public health care and education system. It has also caused inflation, which means the prices of food and housing have risen dramatically. This adds to the growing frustration among Syrians who initially welcomed their Iraqi brothers and sisters gladly. There is also the ominous sense that the sectarian violence in Iraq could spill over into Syria at any moment.

In May, Condoleeza Rice briefly met with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moalem, ending U.S. diplomatic

isolation of Syria, but recent meetings don't qualify as "carrot and stick" diplomacy unless we accept that "the only carrot is no stick." Rather than offering assistance to the Syrian government or the UN to deal with the heavy burden of so many people escaping circumstances that it has created, the U.S. maintains a series of sanctions by way of the Syria Accountability Act of 2003, which include the following:

- Ban on exports of products of the United States;
- Ban on U.S. businesses investing or operating in Syria;
- Restriction on travel of Syrian diplomats to within a 25-mile radius of their posting in the United States;
- Prohibition on Syrian air carriers from take-off, landing, and overflight of the United States;
- Reduction of U.S. diplomatic contacts with Syria; or
- Blocking U.S. persons from engaging in any property transactions with the Syrian government.

The Syria Accountability Act of 2003 ostensibly aims to "hold Syria accountable for the serious international security problems it has caused in the Middle East." This may seem crazy, but that's because it is. In psychology this is a combination of defense mechanisms commonly used by psychopaths. Namely denial and projection, in which confrontation with a problem or reality is avoided by denying the existence of that problem or reality or in this case by "projecting" guilt or blame onto someone else. It's almost as crazy as the perpetrator blaming the victim, which I should mention is also a current bi-partisan approach being employed by the U.S. Congress.

Whenever I leave my apartment here in Yarmouk, I inevitably encounter Iraqis and Palestinians. Since my nationality is generally known in the neighborhood and considering how negatively U.S. foreign policy has personally affected my neighbors here, one would think that they would be inclined to throw rotten fruit at me at the very least. Astonishingly, I instead receive friendly greetings and smiles.

As a typical example of Iraqi forgiveness, I recently met an Iraqi man selling fresh Iraqi bread at a newly opened
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stall. He asked where I was from and I confessed, adding my personal apology for and opposition to U.S. aggression in Iraq. He said he had a problem only with the U.S. government and military, not the people. Twelve years of cruel economic sanctions and aerial bombardment were followed by four years of war crimes, pillaging and devastation that came with the

U.S. occupation of Iraq, as well as the failure to date of U.S. civil society (myself included) to build a sufficient movement to end it. After all that, the Iraqi baker still insists that Americans and Iraqis are friends. Go figure. We certainly could do more to preserve our friends.



Attuned to Tom and Jerry

By Kathy Kelly

July, 2007

Amman, Jordan

Last week, Umm Daoud, (her name means “Mother of Daoud”), met me and three friends at a bridge that crosses into her neighborhood. It was just after sundown; the streets were darkening as she guided us toward the narrow path which leads to her home. She and her five children live in a humble two room apartment in a crowded “low-rent” area of Amman.

As guests, my friends and I sat on a makeshift piece of furniture, an old door placed atop two crates and covered by a thin mat. She and her children sat on the floor. Apart from a television and a small table, the living room had no other furniture. The television remained “on” while Samil, her youngest son, seemed completely absorbed in a “Tom and Jerry” cartoon.

“Tom and Jerry” antics are a favorite in almost every home I visit here. Spanning multiple generations and regions, the duo’s popularity seems to reflect benign values. “Sometimes Tom wins and sometimes Jerry, and sometimes they both win, especially if they team up against an enemy,” a young Iraqi woman told me. “You love them both. It’s a bit like fights between brothers and sisters.”

Incalculably less benign are the “real life” chase scenes Umm Daoud’s family has endured. When I first met them, five months ago, Abu Daoud, the father, told me that he had been a prosperous goldsmith in Baghdad. “We had two houses and two cars,” said Umm Daoud. “Now, I have two brothers killed, and all this suffering, and no way to take care of my children.” Abu Daoud told us that two years ago, Daoud, his teenage eldest child, was kidnapped for ransom in Baghdad. Fearful for their son’s

life and wanting to save him from torture, the family sold all that they had, gained his release, and swiftly escaped with him into Jordan.

Abu Daoud came to Amman and moved his family into their current home, hopeful that he might eventually find work. But for an “illegal” resident in Jordan, among hundreds of thousands of others who’ve fled Iraq, there was no work. He sought help from the few groups doling out rations of food and assistance with rent. Young boys would taunt him, calling him an old man and an “Iraqi terrorist”, while adults would threaten to report him to the authorities as an “illegal” - but still he had to keep seeking work.

Three months ago, Abu Daoud learned that his cousin, in Iraq, had received a death threat. The cousin tried to flee Baghdad, but was unable to do so swiftly enough. When his body was found, it was chopped into pieces. This news further traumatized Abu Daoud. Engulfed by pain and misery, he became abusive toward his wife and children. Fights erupted between them. Two months ago, Abu Daoud disappeared. His wife believes he fled because he couldn’t bear facing them, each day, with his feelings of anxiety and guilt.

Umm Daoud’s eyes fill with smoldering fury as she spills out feelings of frustration, mistrust, and humiliation.

Neighbors in adjoining homes practice a very conservative form of Islam. Even though Umm Daoud is a Sabeen, she fears being judged harshly by them and opts to cover her head whenever she leaves the house. When her husband left her, some of these neighbors said this was a punishment she deserved. She’d like to live elsewhere, beyond their threats and curses, but she can’t afford the rent anywhere else.

Two of the daughters are diabetic, needing weekly

insulin injections, but Umm Daoud can afford neither the medicine nor the lab work to track their illness. Now, one of her daughter's eyesight is failing. Untreated insulin can lead to full blindness. Umm Daoud has to hide all of this from her neighbors. They may be here for a long time, and if the neighbors find out that the girls are diabetic, she fears it could destroy their future. Would it be difficult to find suitors for them? I'm not sure. Looking at these beautiful young women, it seems unlikely, but blindness is a frightening condition, —who am I to guess? Umm Daoud herself needs medical attention for a kidney ailment, but her daughters' untreated medical crisis takes up all her attention.

Caritas, a charity organization in Amman, offers free medical checkups for Iraqis, but no medications.

Through registering with the UNHCR, the family became eligible for a "salary" of 60 Jordanian Dinar per month. This barely covers rent. A light fixture in the room where they all sleep is broken, but they can't afford to fix it, nor can they manage a simple plumbing job to repair a faucet that steadily, noisily leaks.

They are too terrified to invite a repair man into the home because the daughters are vulnerable and could be exploited. If a man took advantage of them, they would have no recourse for protection because anyone could accuse them of being illegal residents, causing them to be deported back to Iraq.

Umm Daoud has already been stung by the humiliation of being so vulnerable. Once, in Amman, a gang stole a sum of money from her. She reported it to the police. In the investigation, someone accused her of being a prostitute and the police department dropped the case.

One note of good news gladdened Umm Daoud and her daughters. Daoud, the older son, excels in soccer and recently qualified for an Iraqi team invited to compete in Seoul, South Korea. For Daoud, a victim of torture when he was kidnapped, playing soccer has been part of recovery. He's in control on the field and the sport has been an important form of therapy. Numerous Iraqis in the "illegal" community pooled money for Daoud's trip.

Toward the end of our visit, Daoud called from Seoul. The family was jubilant, except for little Samil, watching his Tom and Jerry cartoon with his back turned to the family. From where I sat, I could see his face. He showed

no emotion whatsoever and never took his eyes off the TV screen. I remembered the playful ten-year old I'd first met, in January of 2007, a little boy whose eyes were alight and animated, who loved climbing onto his father's lap. The family seems to understand his need to withdraw.

Before leaving, Noah Merrill, who, with his wife, Natalie, has worked hard to design a project called "Direct Aid Initiative," (see www.electroniciraq.net), suggested that they could help cover some of the family's medical expenses. He assured Umm Daoud that this would be an act of friendship, not charity. "Of course it's not charity!" she said, flinging her hands upward in exasperation. "You already have our oil!" She cocked her head slightly, a smile on her face. "You are perhaps living well with our oil," she said, as we all nodded our heads, "so this is not a charity." Such humor, as if this whole nightmare of the war and its complications were just brothers and sisters fighting, and she could wryly forgive.

The UNHCR has appealed for \$121 million dollars to assist Iraqis who've been displaced from their homes, 2.2 million of whom are internally displaced inside Iraq and close to two million more who have sought shelter in neighboring countries. UN documents appeal to people's charitable instincts, but UN workers know full well just how politicized the discussions have become.

The U.S. could direct the amount of money spent on just six hours of the war in Iraq and fully meet the UNHCR request to assist millions of people who have barely survived this U.S. "war of choice."

Democratic candidates claim they are interested in ending the Iraq war. They claim concern for Iraqi victims. I believe these claims. Yet by obediently funding the war machine, most of them play predictable, scripted roles in a dull and murderous war without end. The victors are always the same, the bloated and menacing producers of weapons, - General Dynamics, Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed, General Electric, - the fat cats whose menacing force always wins. The losers can watch their children become crippled, starved, maimed or dead. Period.

Yesterday, Umm Daoud and her daughters paid me a visit. Samil chose to stay behind. He didn't want to miss an episode of Tom and Jerry.



Voices for Creative Nonviolence

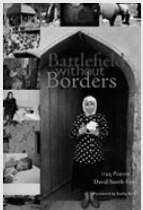
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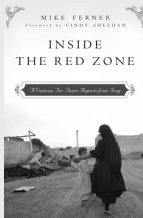
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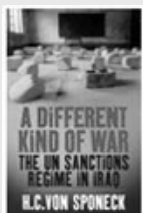
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Battlefield Without Borders, Iraq Poems, by David Smith-Ferri with a Foreword written by Kathy Kelly.
Available at:
www.BattlefieldWithoutBorders.org



Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran For Peace reports from Iraq, by Mike Ferner.
Available at:
www.MikeFerner.org



A Different Kind Of War: The UN Sanctions Regime In Iraq, by H.C. Von Sponeck
see vcnv.org home page for information

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM VOICES FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

The following are available from Voices for Creative Nonviolence. All prices include postage. You may make checks out to VCNV and mail to VCNV; 1249 W. Argyle St #2; Chicago, IL 60640. Please note in the memo of the check which item you are purchasing and quantity.

“In a Time of Siege: Defying War and Sanctions in Iraq”, a **Peace Productions** documentary on the Voices in the Wilderness campaign to end U.S. economic sanctions. Narrated, in part, by Studs Terkel, the film includes footage of Voices members meeting U.S. Marines as they entered Baghdad following the Shock and Awe bombing. **\$20**

Other Lands Have Dreams: From Baghdad to Pekin Prison by Kathy Kelly. **\$15**

Taking a Stand: A Guide To Peace Teams And Accompaniment Projects, by Elizabeth Boardman. **\$10**

September 11th Families for a Peaceful Tomorrows, edited by David Potorti. **\$15**