

IRAQ

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dent Coalition recently issued a statement saying world peace is "inconceivable" without "abandonment of the political blocs, the sacrifice of all forms of economic, military, or political imperialism, and the transformation of mutual distrust into collaboration."

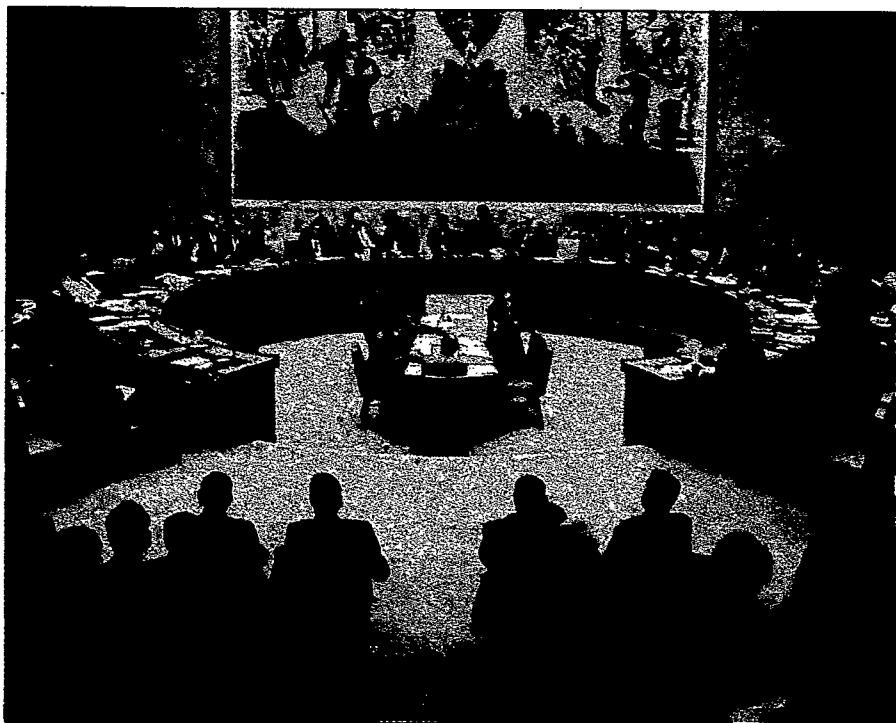
"St. Francis believed in God's gift of compassion and the 'power' of nonviolence," said the leaders of the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor in an Oct. 12 letter to Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. "St. Francis also taught that God is alive in every human person and all of creation."

In an Oct. 8 letter to Bush, the executive board of the National Council of Churches meeting in New York called on a universal Christian ethic in urging the president to "reverse the momentum toward war."

A few days later at a press conference in Washington, the NCC's general secretary, the Rev. Bob Edgar, said the potential cost of war could be hundreds of billions of dollars. The United States also would be paying for it alone, unlike the Gulf War, when allies paid for two-thirds of the \$60 billion cost, he noted.

"Whether it's 100 billion or 500 billion, it's going to be an investment that's taken away from our children," Rev. Edgar said at the Oct. 11 press conference, held to release a letter signed by more than 60 church leaders from the United States and United Kingdom.

"We do not believe that pre-emptive war with Iraq: is a last resort, could effectively guard against massive civilian casualties, would be waged with adequate international authority, and could predictably create a result proportion-



Reuters/CNS

Members of the United Nations Security Council discuss arms inspections and the use of military force against Iraq at the United Nations in New York Oct. 16.

ate to the cost," the letter said, referring to specific points of just-war principles.

"And it is not clear that the threat of Saddam Hussein cannot be contained in other, less costly ways," it added. "An attack on Iraq could set a precedent for pre-emptive war, further destabilize the Middle East, and fuel more terrorism. We therefore do not believe that war with Iraq can be justified under the principle of a 'just war,' but would be illegal, unwise and immoral."

Yet, "just-war thinking begins with a basic moral judgment — that legitimate authorities have a moral obligation to defend the peace of order," George Weigel, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, wrote in a recent column. "History has shown that

that kind of peace can be advanced, in certain circumstances, by the proportionate, discriminate and strategically wise use of armed force."

He said the U.N. charter implies that defense against aggression does not require authorization, but is an inalienable right.

Bishop Kenneth A. Angell of Burlington, Vt., in an Oct. 11 statement, said he worried about undermining U.N. authority at a moment that "will determine its credibility and effectiveness as a world protector and enforcer of peace and justice."

Other organizations and leaders talked about the plight of average citizens if there is a war against Iraq.

War causes hunger, according to an Oct. 4 statement by Bread for the World, a grass-roots Christian advo-

cacy and education organization. "A war against Iraq would create more suffering," the statement said. "Many innocent people will die or be maimed."

Twelve years of economic sanctions against Iraq have not weakened Hussein's power, according to an Oct. 7 statement by the Churches for Middle East Peace, but have "resulted in a deterioration of health, economic and food conditions."

The embargo has led to more than a million deaths, according to Bishop Patrick J. McGrath of San Jose, Calif. In a war, the cost to life, "so central to the church's teaching," on both sides "is sadly overlooked."

"A great danger in answering violence with violence is that we may become what we oppose," he said in a recent letter to Catholics in his diocese.

Iraqis would develop the social structure to "bring down the Saddam regime if they were allowed to exist without this crushing embargo," Tom Cordaro of Pax Christi USA told the *Catholic Explorer*, newspaper of the Joliet Diocese.

"Citizens chafing under an unjust regime may take measures to remove it, and other governments may assist them if necessary," noted John Kelsay, a professor at Florida State University, at an Oct. 5 symposium sponsored by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

Addressing an audience Oct. 8 at the Marianist-run University of Dayton (Ohio), Gerry Powers, director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of International Justice and Peace, said, "The lack of consensus among experts should give us pause before we pursue a war option."

Contributing to this story were Mary Ann Wyand in Indianapolis and Kathrynne Skonicki in Joliet.

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