

For Immediate Release

Event: Friday rally starts drive to mark five years of war and occupation in Iraq, calls on Democrats to "Get the HELL out of Iraq!" Date: Friday, February 29, 2008 Time: 5:00 PM Place: Pioneer Courthouse Square, SW Broadway & SW Yamhill, downtown	Contacts: Portland Peaceful Response Coalition pprc@riseup.net www.pprc-news.org
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Friday rally starts drive to mark five years of war and occupation in Iraq, calls on Democrats to "Get the HELL out of Iraq!"

As plans move forward for the next big peace rally and march in downtown Portland, set for the South Park Blocks on Saturday, March 15th, local peace group directs their ire at both Republicans and Democrats.

They're quick to acknowledge they'd rather see a Democrat in the White House in 2009, saying Bush, Cheney and the Republican Party deserve prosecution for war crimes, but local anti-war group Portland Peaceful Response Coalition says the Democrats share a good portion of blame for not ending the war after their election victories in 2006.

"The Democrats have been in a position in Congress to defund the war, to force a withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, leaving enough money in the pipeline to get them home safely but not enough to continue Bush's criminal war," said William Seaman, a volunteer with the Portland Peaceful Response Coalition. "They not only failed to act on the growing opposition to the war that gave them majorities in the House and Senate, choosing instead to continue to fund Bush's war, but they have also failed to shut down Guantanamo, they've failed to end this country's use of torture and detention without due process, they've failed to stop warrantless wiretapping, and they've refused to hold the Bush administration responsible for these and other crimes." PPRC has been a part of local efforts to pressure Congress to begin impeachment hearings, distributing thousands of the bright red "IMPEACH" bumper stickers that can now be seen throughout Portland.

PPRC has teamed up with other social justice and peace groups to organize an "Action Tent" focused on human and civil rights for the March 15th mobilization. "We feel this highlights one of the most important elements in the struggle to resist the Bush Administration's so-called 'war on terror'," said Seaman. "We're hoping that folks will come out on March 15th to take part in the protest and the peace march, but also to learn more about organizations like the Center for Constitutional Rights that are defending our most basic civil liberties and human rights, and equally important that they will get involved in those efforts."

The organizers for the Constitutional Rights action tent emphasized that Democrats have also been complicit in the damage done to basic civil and human rights under the Bush Administration. "They overwhelmingly voted for the PATRIOT Act, many voted for the Military Commissions Act which radically undermined the most basic rights to due process, including the abridgment of habeas corpus rights, and they are barely putting up a fight to hold telecommunications companies to account for their part in the Bush Administration's warrantless wiretapping crimes," said Seaman. "The reason folks need to come out to protest on March 15th, and again on March 19th, is that without sustained and increased pressure, the Democrats and the Republicans will have US troops in Iraq indefinitely."

In addition to the mobilization on Saturday, March 15th, there will also be protests on March 19th, the actual anniversary of Bush's Iraq War, coinciding with actions in Washington, DC, and in many other cities across the country. (Call 503-236-3065, Peace & Justice Works, for details on the March 19th local actions.)

The "Action Tents" for the March 15th mobilization will be open throughout the day, from 10:00AM to 6:00 PM, and include topics such as Military Resistance and Recovery; Costs of War; Immigrant Rights and Constitutional and Human Rights; US out of the Middle East: Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran...; Palestine: 40 Years of Occupation and 60 years of Dispossession, and others.

Speakers at the rally will include Zahra Sultan, Iraqi social worker and director of Saverefugees.org; Sergeant Kevin Benderman, Iraq war veteran, conscientious objector and war resister; Bob Watada, father of Lt. Ehren Watada, the first Commissioned Officer to refuse deployment to Iraq; Tom Chamberlain, President of Oregon AFL-CIO; Andrea Cano, Executive Director of the Oregon Farm Labor Ministry; Youth organizers Terell Wilson and Lizo Wallace, and Barbara Dudley, Professor in the Hatfield School of Government, former Executive Director of Greenpeace USA. The rally will be hosted by spoken word artist Walidah Imarisha and Megan Brooker of the PDX Peace Coalition and Military Families Speak Out.

The broad theme for this year's action marking five years of war and occupation in Iraq is "World Without War: A Mobilization of Resistance and Hope. Stop the War, Bring the Troops Home Now!"

The March 15th mobilization has been organized by dozens of local peace and social justice organizations, marking the fifth year of the Bush Administration's war and occupation in Iraq. For more information and to volunteer with Portland Peaceful Response Coalition, please call 503-344-5078. Visit the PPRC website for more information and for a list of co-sponsors and endorsers for the March 15th mobilization: www.pprc-news.org