

MEDIA ADVISORY

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For Immediate Release

Event: Friday rally and peace march marks six years of Iraq war, calls for prosecution of Bush Administration officials for war crimes.

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Date: Friday, March 20, 2009

Time: 5:00 PM at Pioneer Courthouse Square

Place: Pioneer Courthouse Square, SW Yamhill & Broadway, downtown Portland

Friday rally and peace march marks six years of Iraq war, calls for prosecution of Bush Administration officials for war crimes.

This week's 5:00 PM Friday rally and peace march at Pioneer Courthouse Square marks six years of Iraq war, and calls for prosecution of Bush Administration officials and other key supporters of the Iraq war for mass murder of tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians. "The most conservative estimate of civilian casualties in Iraq is approaching 100,000, and we can be certain that the actual number is more probably approaching 600,000," said William Seaman, a volunteer with *Portland Peaceful Response Coalition*. "If we are to take even the most modest steps to ensure that this staggering crime of aggression is not repeated in the future by our country, we must bring those responsible to justice."

Iraq Body Count, which relies on information "drawn from cross-checked media reports, hospital, morgue, NGO and official figures", now puts the total number of Iraqi civilians killed by the war and occupation at between 91,129 and 99,508. A *Brookings Institution* report put the total at 116,561 (towards the end of 2008), a *World Health Organization* study put the number at 151,000, and the John Hopkins School of Public Health survey put the total at 650,000 (towards the middle of 2006). This latter study indicates that the casualties could run as high as one million Iraqi civilian deaths. The number of serious injuries is many times that number, and over two million Iraqis have been made refugees.

"The people of the United States are faced with an urgent moral imperative to investigate the conduct of Condoleza Rice, David Addington, Donald Rumsfeld, Douglas Feith, Dick Cheney, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, John Yoo, Alberto Gonzalez,

George Tenet, Jay Bybee, Paul Wolfowitz, Karl Rove, George Bush and many other operatives of the Bush administration who played key roles in engineering the United States aggression, the war and occupation in Iraq, or implemented the torture or other criminal policies," said Seaman. "It is an important first step to initiate a Congressional investigation, but unless that includes or leads to a criminal investigation, we will have failed in our obligation to the people of Iraq, to ourselves as Americans, to our damaged democracy, to the United States Constitution, to the moral and legal foundation of our society."

A poll earlier this year indicated that 62 percent of Americans favor a criminal investigation or an independent panel to explore charges of torture by the Bush Administration. Senator Patrick Leahy has been trying to initiate an investigation into torture and warrantless wiretaps under Bush, and Representative John Conyers has introduced legislation to set up an investigative panel in Congress. "We support the efforts by Senator Leahy and Representative Conyers, but they do not go nearly far enough," said Seaman. "We have to build support for those and more aggressive efforts in Congress by calling our representatives, but we also have to support efforts abroad to encourage other countries to enforce international law and bring these suspected war criminals to account."

Both Spain and Italy have outstanding warrants for American citizens who were carrying out aspects of the Bush Administration's "war on terror", and lawyers for the *Center for Constitutional Rights* have cooperated with colleagues in Germany to persuade that government to bring Donald Rumsfeld to book for his role. Even Canadians have made an effort on this front, petitioning their government to block the entry of George Bush into their country, arguing that the former US President should be either barred or detained for condoning the use of torture.

According to Gail Davidson of *Lawyers Against the War*, they have "demanded, first of all, that the Canadian government bar Bush from Canada as a person suspected of torture and other war crimes and crimes against humanity, ... [a]nd secondly, ... advised the Canadian government that if they do let Mr. Bush into Canada, once he crosses the border, that triggers Canadian legal responsibility to investigate Mr. Bush for torture and, if there are grounds, then to either prosecute him in Canada or to extradite him to another country that is willing and able to do so."

"We salute our neighbors to the north for showing the moral fortitude to make this effort on behalf of international law and human rights," said Seaman. "And in case there's any doubt that our intentions are bipartisan, we want to be very clear that every Democrat in Congress who played a roll in facilitating or driving our country into this criminal war

ought to be subject to precisely the same investigation and, if appropriate, criminal prosecution."

March 19th was the sixth anniversary of the US attack on Iraq. The peace marchers today are calling for a rapid withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and a radical shift in priorities for government spending.

"As millions of Americans are losing their jobs and their homes due to the devastation wrought by the financial sector and their lackeys in Congress, we continue to pump billions of taxpayer dollars into these wars and occupations," said Seaman. "Let's slash the military budget and put that money into rebuilding our country's infrastructure, teaching our young men and women trades instead of training them to kill, and let's pay the reparations we owe to the people of Iraq and Afghanistan so they too can rebuild the lives that have been shattered by the US policies of the past thirty years."

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