

NO NEW WAR IN IRAQ

Both major political parties are once again standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the US, in support of what amounts to a new military intervention in Iraq.

The process began with the dropping of humanitarian aid supplies to the Yezidi. It has now moved on to the delivery of weapons and munitions to Kurdish Peshmerga forces. Meanwhile, Defence Minister David Johnston has indicated that Australian armed forces (Super Hornet warplanes and C130s) are to be made available to support whatever action the US decides upon.

All of this has happened with scarcely any discussion – in or outside of the parliament. No questioning or dissent has been heard in this drive towards intervention and, possibly, eventual war. (However, a recent poll shows that 78% of the population opposes having Australian ‘boots on the ground’ in Iraq.)

Even the proposal that there be a parliamentary debate about the intervention, so that the government could make its case to the Australian people, has been opposed by both major parties. There is no possibility for the parliament to take any part in the decision to send Australian forces overseas. Nor has the Abbott government explained the sudden need to switch from aid to arms. And it has certainly not explained what Australia hopes to achieve.

The horror in Iraq today is a direct consequence of the war on that began with the invasion of 2003. John Howard’s government joined that invasion on the basis of falsehoods and against the opinion of the majority of the population. It appears that the present government is eagerly waiting for a request to follow the US once again.

The massive “shock and awe” bombing and the 11-year occupation of Iraq created huge numbers of civilian casualties – including more than 1 million dead - and massive internal displacement of people. The West’s propping up of the repressive regime that followed, laid the basis for the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) fundamentalists. IS has become the latest reason for intervention. Ironically, it is using weapons captured from the Iraqi army and originally supplied by the US.

The lesson that should have been learnt from Iraq is that military meddling in the affairs of the Middle East does not work. There was a disastrous outcome last time and no evidence to indicate anything different this time.

Australia and the US do not even recognise Kurdistan as an independent state. Sending arms to the Kurds means that Australia is continuing to meddle – in this case within the movement for Kurdish self-determination.

If the Australian government was serious about helping the Iraqi minorities, rather than following the US into military intervention, it would immediately:

- Expand the refugee program and offer sanctuary to the displaced and traumatised
- Send humanitarian aid – food; engineers; doctors and constructions workers.

Sending yet more armaments to the area, which is already wracked by years of warfare, will not reduce the level of violence it is experiencing. The area needs less weaponry, not more.

IPAN-NSW, Stop the War Coalition, Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition, Marrickville Peace Group, People for Nuclear Disarmament (WA)