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**COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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Item 9: Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world

Situation of human rights in Iraq

Few weeks ago, two senior United Nations humanitarian officials submitted their resignation to the Secretary-General of this great institution that represents humanity's aspirations in this difficult and dangerous time. These two distinguished officials are UN humanitarian coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Hans von Sponeck, and Ms. Jutta Burghardt, Director of the UN World Food Programme for Iraq. Both officials explained to the media through several press conferences that they submitted their resignation in protest against the policy of "oil for food" which resulted in a true humanitarian tragedy for the Iraqi people.

Although the American spokesman for the State Department expressed happiness and relief for the departure of Mr. Sponeck because of his repeated criticism of the embargo measures and the sanctions imposed on Iraq, the French foreign ministry spokesman, on the other hand, expressed France's respect and recognition for the efforts Mr. Sponeck exerted, and admitted that Mr. Sponeck's assessment of the humanitarian situation in Iraq was consistent with the documented reality on ground as reported by observers currently present in Iraq.

Apparently, the conscience of the two UN international officials who resigned could no longer bear the overwhelming silence and indifference to the tragedy caused by the Security Council resolutions. A tragedy whose victims are the Iraqi people from every denomination and background, and whom for a decade, have had to pay dearly for unjust Security Council resolutions based on collective punishment and resulting in unbearable human suffering.

Mr. Sponeck made public statements saying that the "oil for food" programme does not meet nor satisfy the basic needs of the Iraqi people. Also, that a significant part of the Security Council resolution of last January cannot be implemented. That's because there is ambiguous and perhaps even intentional mixing of civil humanitarian considerations (which are the main objectives) with American and British political policies concerning disarmament of Iraq. He wondered how long the tormented Iraqi people would remain subjected to this game of dirty politics!

It is also worthwhile to mention that the former UN Coordinator at the "food for oil" programme had submitted his resignation as well two years prior to Mr. Sponeck's resignation and had made similar statements as those made by him. Nonetheless, the American spokesman for the State Department, supported by similar British reiteration, added no insight into the problem except America's insistence to continue imposing the sanctions on Iraq. Although everyone knows that these sanctions have been in vain after ten years of American desperate and questionable attempts to carry out its underhanded political will. An ill will which we think does not truly represent the American people's spirit which is reflected through random acts of kindness as depicted in episodes of rescuing cats on tree branches and dolphins drifting ashore by the tide.

International public opinion bears American and British politicians the responsibility for the tragic humanitarian consequences especially the dangerous and dramatic rise in the rate of child and infant mortality due to the sanctions imposed. In the view of international public opinion, no means to an end can ever justify this horrific burden of human sacrifice.

International public opinion which unquestionably denounced Iraq's involvement in a neighboring country, is unaware yet of the true and essential reasons that made Iraq react in this manner. Hence, until the whole truth is revealed, international public opinion is being misled into compliance without prior determination of or speculation into the alleged enormity of Iraq's doing and whether it is worth starving and killing children in a series that has lasted for ten years. In fact, there is wide deluding and deliberate obscuring of the subject by the media.

Many international offenses and mistakes made by leaders and peoples throughout human history have taken place up to modern/contemporary time. Some of these offenses and mistakes violated native American Indians, black Africans, Hiroshima victims, the massacre of Jews and gypsies in Europe, Britain's illegal drugs scandal in China, the western use of depleted uranium (DU) weapons of mass destruction during the Gulf War by USA and Britain, and the Israeli bombing of civilians in Lebanon and destruction of its infrastructure which is still taking place. Nonetheless, the international community did not ever go as far in its retaliation as starving a nation of people for days and months and years and killing children without mercy or sympathy.

Recently, we heard that seventy American congressmen called for the lifting of sanctions against Iraq. People of goodwill have waited for this step, which genuinely conveys the great human spirit that transpires every now and then in our world.

This is the impressive and remarkable human spirit, which should prevail in our human society in order to achieve peace on earth and revive brotherhood and sisterhood throughout its regions. The resignation of Sponeck, Burghardt, and former senior UN officials in protest against the human tragedies befalling the Iraqi people due to the repressive sanctions should alert those whose numb conscience has been robbed of its humanity.

Since the members of international non-governmental organizations represent the people of the world, it is their obligation to raise the consciousness and conscience of the human spirit. NGOs must constantly and firmly call upon the human spirit since without it no peace on earth can be achieved. So let our strong joint appeal to the international community be in this meeting today for the immediate lifting of sanctions which have been imposed on the Iraqi people and the children of Iraq, once and for all, as of today and not tomorrow.

EA Ford

29 March 2000