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**IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251
OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED "HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL"**

Joint written statement* submitted by Congregations of St. Joseph, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status, Dominicans for Justice and Peace (Order of Preachers), Dominican Leadership Conference (DLC), Pax Christi International, International Catholic Peace Movement and Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 February 2007]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The situation of Iraqi refugees and displaced persons¹

Dominicans for Justice and Peace (Order of Preachers), Dominican Leadership Conference, Pax Christi International, Congregations of St. Joseph and Sisters of Mercy of the Americas express their deep concern for refugees and internally displaced people of Iraq. An estimated 100,000 Iraqis leave their country each month, including many of Iraq's best educated professionals. Approximately 2,000,000 Iraqis have fled since the 2003 invasion and about 1,800,000 Iraqis are internally displaced.

The humanitarian needs of the people of Iraq are urgent. Four years after the armed intervention by the coalition forces, the civilian population of Iraq remains the main victim of the prevailing security situation characterized by terrorist acts, action by armed groups, criminal gangs, religious extremists, militias, security and military forces. Growing unemployment, poverty, various forms of discrimination and increasingly limited access to basic services, prevent most citizens from realizing their economic, social and cultural rights.

In addition to being a grave violation of the right to life, the ongoing insecurity remains a major obstacle to any efforts for the reconstruction of institutions, for the economy of the country and for a return to normalcy in the lives of the people.

An immediate response to the humanitarian crisis is to attend to the basic needs of those who have left their homes because of the ongoing war in Iraq. Middle Eastern countries, including Syria and Jordan have shown openness in welcoming the refugees. As the numbers have increased, the overburdened public services of the host countries are becoming overwhelmed by the increased refugee population. According to UNHRC estimates, Syria has taken in 1,000,000 Iraqis, Jordan, 750,000, Egypt, 80,000-130,000. The United States has taken in 463 Iraqis since the beginning of the 2003 invasion; however, the US Administration announced on February 15, 2007 that it would grant asylum for up to 7000 refugees over the next year.

As the war continues and more civilians flee, neighboring states are having difficulties absorbing the influx of refugees. Jordan, a country with a population of only 6 million, already has a refugee population of 1.5 million registered Palestinian refugees and the new refugees are causing the population to grow more quickly than is manageable.

The host nations that receive the refugees generally do not provide Iraqis with any official status and therefore become the equivalent of undocumented workers. Middle class Iraqis may be teachers, blacksmiths, architects, hair-dressers, etc., but because of their status, they are forced to look for work in the informal sector, where jobs are hard to find. Others are afraid to seek jobs for fear of their undocumented status being discovered, which could result in deportation to Iraq.

Medical and mental health needs are unmet. Children are denied education, except in some

¹ Adrian Dominican Sisters Office of Global Mission, Justice and Peace; the Partnership for Global Justice and Passionists International also share the views expressed in this statement.

private schools where costs make this prohibitive. Employment, even in the informal sector is difficult to find. Social services are generally unavailable.

The Palestinian refugees who were living in Iraq are also in crisis. Palestinians are the most vulnerable refugees fleeing Iraq because they have nowhere else to flee. They already lack proper documents to leave their host country and are currently living in extremely difficult conditions at border sites.

The immediate care of those who have left their homes because of the ongoing conflict in Iraq is urgent. The United Nations refugee services must dramatically increase resources and the international community needs to respond immediately by providing resources and support for the basic safety, food, clothing and shelter. Current refugee assistance efforts are extremely under-funded.

Recommendations:

Dominicans for Justice and Peace (Order of Preachers), Dominican Leadership Conference, Pax Christi International, Congregations of St. Joseph and Sisters of Mercy of the Americas strongly recommend that:

-the international community through the United Nations seek ways and means to provide basic services including food, clothing and shelter to the Iraqi people who have left their homeland seeking refuge in neighboring countries.

-medical and educational services be provided to the Iraqi refugees in their host countries.

-western countries open their doors to the Iraqis as they seek safety and security for their families including the United States, Great Britain and the Allied Nations who are currently in Iraq.

-the United Nations refugee effort seek support from the international community so that basic services are provided for the Iraqis who have been displaced and are living in other regions of Iraq.

We also urge the international community through the United Nations to take with utmost seriousness its responsibilities for the monumental and long-term challenge of the recovery and reconstruction of Iraq, devastated both by long-term sanctions and the ravages of war.
