

WARZONE WHITEHALL

A Nonviolent die-in against war and sanctions on Iraq

December 2nd 2002

A Briefing for Mass Civil Disobedience

Introduction

The projected war with Iraq is immoral, illegal, unnecessary and counter-productive. Tens - maybe hundreds - of thousands of people will almost certainly be killed if the war takes place.

On December 2nd we will be in Whitehall, at the heart of the British Government, to say 'NO' to the war with our bodies, 'dying' in on the road, disrupting business as usual in Whitehall, showing Mr Blair what the human cost of war looks like.

Joining us in this act of nonviolent civil disobedience will be Green Euro MP Caroline Lucas and political comedian Mark Thomas.

We agree with George W Bush that **'inaction is not an option'**. We must act now to stop the war.

In this briefing.

In this briefing you will find information about the prop-making day, nonviolence workshop and legal briefing (p. 3) doing presswork with your local media (p. 4) and information about affinity groups and possible penalties (p. 2).

Nonviolence

The act of civil disobedience which **voices uk** and Active Resistance to the Roots of War (ARROW) have helped organise on Monday 2 December is an attempt to respond creatively, and nonviolently, to the massive violence of the threatened war. We therefore ask everyone who takes part in the Die-in in London to take part in a spirit of nonviolence.

We want to place at the centre of our action the suffering that ordinary families in Iraq have struggled with over the last twelve years, and the suffering they will be forced to endure if war takes place.

For the purposes of this action participants are asked to abide by the following guidelines: NO threats / violence (including pushing), verbal abuse, property damage, drugs, alcohol or flags.

Civil disobedience

We believe that civil disobedience and nonviolent action are powerful tools that we can use to resist an illegal and immoral war. In using these tools we are drawing on a rich tradition of protest and dissent that includes not only Gandhi and Martin Luther King but also the 'People Power' revolutions in the Philipines and Eastern Europe, the Suffragettes, Danish resistance to Nazi occupation during WWII, the Argentinian Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and many others.

Those who profess to favor freedom, yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground ... Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

Frederick Douglass, African-American abolitionist

After December 2nd

Roughly 4000 people in Britain have now signed the **Pledge of Resistance** committing themselves to taking part (or supporting) acts of nonviolent resistance to the war, should it take place. Contingency plans for action now exist for London, Scotland, Brighton and several other places. To find out more visit the ARROW web-site: www.j-n-v.org or call 0207 837 4511.

January 18th / 19th 2003: A Weekend of Nonviolent Action Against the War at Northwood Military Base in London.

Details to be posted on the ARROW web-site (www.j-n-v.org) shortly.

Put these dates in your diary now!

If you go to one demonstration and then go home, that's something, but the people in power can live with that. What they can't live with is sustained pressure that keeps building, organisations that keep doing things, people that keep learning lessons from the last time and doing it better the next time.

Noam Chomsky

Preparation Session

11am - 5pm, Sunday 1 December, Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, off Bruce Road, E3 (nearest tube Bromley-by-Bow).

We strongly encourage everyone who is considering taking part in the Die-in to come to this preparation session at the Kingsley Hall.

As well as going through our plan for the day, the legal situation, and nonviolence preparation, we will also be forming affinity groups to help make the action as effective as possible.

Saturday November 30th: Prop making. 12 - 4pm, Kingsley Hall

Come and help make props for the day ('bloodied' bandages, tabards etc...)

Sunday December 1st: Preparation Session, Legal Briefing and Teach-in. 11am - 5pm, Kingsley Hall.

- 11.00 Introductions and affinity group formation for people risking arrest (Milan Rai, Voices/ARROW)
- 11.20 initial outline of schedule for the day with 5 minute initial discussion in affinity groups on how to respond to different situations (Gabriel Carlyle, Voices/ARROW)
- 11.30 What's Going On
Update on the drive to war (Milan Rai)
- 12.00 Parallel sessions
 - A) Nonviolent Direct Action preparation workshop (Kathryn Tulip and Matthew Herbert)
 - B) Non-arrestable street theatre session
 - C) Prop-making
 - D) Improving skills in arguing against the war (by request) (Milan Rai)
- 1.30pm Lunch
- 2.00pm Legal briefing (Kathryn Tulip, Activists' Legal Project)
- 3.00pm Parallel sessions
 - A) Nonviolent Direct Action preparation workshop contd.

Directions for Kingsley Hall and Whitehall Place.

Kingsley Hall (from Bromley-by-Bow tube station): exit, turn left and walk downhill. Turn off (left) into St Leonards Street and then left again into Grace Street. Powis Road is at the bottom of Grace Street and the Hall is on Powis Road! The whole journey should take 5-10 minutes. If you get lost call 07980 748 555.

Whitehall Place (from Trafalgar Square): walk down Whitehall towards Parliament Square. The turning into Whitehall Place is on the left-hand side of the road.

- B) Legal observers briefing
 - C) Stewards briefing
 - 4.30pm Final session
 - 4.50pm Evaluation
 - 5.00pm Close
- Crashpad accommodation available Sat/Sun nights: please contact 0845 458 2564 (local rate call)

Monday 2nd December: Warzone Whitehall. Meet 10.30 am Whitehall Place (see above for directions).

We will gather in Whitehall Place at 10.30am. Props and 'bust' cards (containing the legal support # and advice on what to do if you are arrested) will be distributed and there will be some brief announcements by the chief steward.

We will then process into Whitehall and continue until we arrive at Downing Street. The 'die-in' will take place at this point, blocking as much of Whitehall as is possible given our numbers, the number of police, barricades etc...

Those not intending to risk arrest will separate out to form a vigil on the pavement. Leaflets will be available for distribution to the general public.

If we are stopped before we reach Downing Street - or if the police attempt to move the procession onto the pavement - the die-in will start at this point.

Effective publicity

We are encouraging everyone who takes part in the Die-in to try to gain coverage of their participation in their local media (radio, press, TV).

While **voices** will be putting considerable effort into getting the action into the national media, the experience of activists over the years is that it is much easier to get your message into the local media.

Tens of thousands of people read the local papers, listen to local radio, and watch the local TV news **in your area**.

The Die-in will be a hundred times more effective in getting its message over to the British people if everyone taking part sends a press release to their local media the week before the event.

The ideal press release explains who, what, where, when, why and how. It contains a contact name and phone number. It is brief, legible, and typed (double-spaced).

For the press, it is best to talk to the news desk early on, tell them the story, find out their deadlines, and fax/post them the press release.

Please send copies of press releases and any coverage you get to **voices**, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX

Raising our voices

‘One country wants to bully the world. We must not allow that.’

Nelson Mandela, 17 September 2002

‘Bombing Iraq would lead to a humanitarian disaster for which the international community would bear a heavy responsibility ... Any attacks that targeted sectors used for ration distribution (eg transport) or for public health (eg water, sanitation, electricity) would be an attack on children’s ability to survive.’

Save the Children Fund UK, March 2002

‘We deplore any military action that regards the deaths of innocent men, women and children as a price worth paying in fighting terrorists, since this is to fight terror with terror.’

Archbishop Rowan Williams and 3000 others,
Pax Christi Declaration, August 2002.

Draft Press Release

[INSERT DATE HERE]

Beanotown woman to ‘die’ in Whitehall Iraq protest

On Monday 7 August, Minnie Minx, 21, will be joining Green MEP Caroline Lucas and comedian Mark Thomas at a mass ‘die-in’ outside Downing Street to protest against the looming war with Iraq.

Hundreds are expected to block Whitehall in this act of civil disobedience in the tradition of Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

Ms Minx, of Minx Road, Beanotown, says, ‘The threatened war on Iraq is immoral, unnecessary and counter-productive and would likely kill tens of thousands of civilians. I feel I must make my voice heard’

According to Save the Children Fund UK bombing Iraq would ‘lead to a humanitarian disaster for which the international community would bear a heavy responsibility’.

The London protest comes days before the deadline for Iraq to make a ‘complete and full’ declaration of its chemical, biological and nuclear programmes - a declaration which could trigger an attack by the US and Britain.

CONTACT: Minnie Minx, 01234 567 890

Organising groups

voices in the wilderness uk is a campaign of civil disobedience against the economic sanctions on Iraq. Since February 1998 voices uk has sent 11 sanctions-breaking delegations to Iraq with medical supplies and textbooks. **voices uk**, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX. tel: 0207 837 0561, email: voices@viwuk.freemove.co.uk, web: www.viwuk.freemove.co.uk

Active Resistance to the Roots of War (ARROW) is a small nonviolent action affinity group. Over the last twelve years ARROW has campaigned on a wide range of issues including East Timor and the arms trade and has held a weekly vigil outside the Foreign Office against the economic sanctions on Iraq since July 1991. ARROW, c/o NVRN, 162 Holloway Road, London N7 8DQ. tel. 0207 607 2302. e-mail: lrcndnvrn@supanet.com, web: www.j-n-v.org

Possible penalties

If you are considering taking part in the Die-in, we strongly recommend that you take part in a nonviolence and legal preparation session such as the one on December 1 (see page 3). Apart from the other benefits, this is the best way to be properly prepared for the possible legal consequences of taking part in the Die-in.

Here we will just note that there are a range of possible charges that the police might decide to bring against someone taking part in the action.

The most obvious is 'highway obstruction', maximum penalty up to £1000. It is possible that refusal to comply with an instruction from a police officer could lead to a charge of 'obstructing an officer,' maximum penalty up to £1000 or 1 month in prison.

An offence which involves more than just sitting in the road are section 5 of the Public Order Act (threatening, abusive, insulting

words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour within sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, distress or alarm), maximum penalty £1000.

Then there is 'conduct likely to lead to a breach of the peace', which merely leads to a court order to 'bind you over' to behave yourself for a set period.

Legal support

There will be legal support for everyone arrested on 2 December, until everyone is released. There will also be legal and court support for everyone charged until the end of their legal process (acquittal, fine paid, or sentence served).

Arrest procedure

If you are unfamiliar with the procedure of getting arrested and processed, please contact the **voices** office on 0207 837 0561 for a copy of the Activists' Legal Project's briefing 'The arrest process and your rights'. This briefing is also available on-line at: www.activistslegalproject.org.uk

Affinity Groups

Affinity groups are small groups of people, usually between three and fifteen, who come together to support one another during nonviolent actions.

Sometimes the group disbands after a particular action, sometimes it carries on meeting.

We are encouraging everyone wishing to risk arrest on this action to be part of an affinity group.

Safety and support

If you're by yourself, it is easy to get lost, especially in a police station when nobody outside knows who you are, or even that you've been arrested. Also, it is good to be around people you know and trust, especially when arrests begin to happen.

Strength and flexibility

Affinity groups help stop the action being a crowd which can be manipulated. Each group has an identity, as does each person within it.

Decision-making

Rather than grand debates being dominated by the few, a collection of affinity groups can use more democratic decision-making processes - in which everyone is involved. The action is unlikely to go exactly as planned, and the group may well need to make decisions on the hoof.

Support roles

An affinity group can contain one or two support people who are not risking arrest, who can witness events. Support people can give the Legal Support Unit accurate information, and wait for arrestees to be released (a vital job).

You may also consider having a local press contact feeding information to your local media during the day.

Forming an affinity group

An affinity group can be a collection of friends, or it can be a group who meet for the first time at a nonviolence and legal preparation session. There will be an opportunity to form affinity groups at the preparation session in London on 1 December (see p. 3).