

DRAFT #2 - STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK OF UNITED FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE – 11/28/08

The Bush regime has come to an end! With the 2008 elections voters repudiated its policies of unilateralism, aggressive foreign policy and preemptive war, and its horrendous domestic agenda. This historic presidential election culminated in the election of Barack Obama, and a House and Senate controlled by the Democrats. With this new political landscape opportunities for progressive change exist and it is up to us to make that happen!

Millions of people have been activated in this process and are looking for ways to build the kinds of change they really want, including the end of the war and occupation of Iraq. They join the millions of people around the world who hope for an end to U.S. unilateral bullying, militarism and wars soaked in oil and blood that are devastating our planet.

We share these hopes. We know that turning them into realities will require broad, creative and continuous action and pressure from the people of the United States. We cannot sit back and expect our elected leaders to change the course alone. Now, more than ever, we must ensure a popular mandate to end the war in Iraq and change the direction of our country.

At the same time, we are in the midst of a severe economic crisis, one that is tied to decades of exorbitant military spending and financial priorities that have undermined the needs of our communities. The connections between war and poverty, between militarism and economic injustice, between peace and prosperity for all have never been clearer.

The work of the peace and justice movement these past 6 years has made a difference. President-elect Obama's success was in no small measure fed by the antiwar sentiment we nurtured all across the country, and his promise to end the war in Iraq. Whatever criticisms we should make of the electoral process in the U.S. there is no doubt that for millions of people this was the vehicle they chose to express themselves. Now is the time to re-double our efforts, to expand our organizing and mobilizing to secure the changes so urgently needed!

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR UFPJ

1) We remain committed to the urgent goal that has always been the centerpiece of our work: immediately ending the U.S. war and occupation in Iraq and bringing all the troops home! We call for an end to the ongoing U.S. war and occupation in Afghanistan.

This is the only way to give the Iraqi and Afghan people the chance to come back from the abyss, enjoy self-determination and rebuild their countries. Withdrawal would also constitute a significant victory against the U.S. global empire, derail U.S. efforts to dominate the Middle East while providing a basis for a wider peace in the region, and undermine corporate-military power and the efforts to privatize and control the world's resources.

Our work has made a tremendous difference: The public debate is not over whether the war in Iraq should end, but when and how it should end. Our clear message remains consistent: end the war now, bring home all the troops and give them the care they need, no permanent bases, reparations to Iraq, and no more money for this war!

Since the fall of 2001, U.S. military forces under the auspices of NATO action have waged war in Afghanistan and now, in the name of fighting "the good war", the Democratic Party, which controls

Congress and the White House, has promised escalation in Afghanistan. UFPJ will take leadership to expose and stop the horrors and costs of seven years of irrational, illegal, counter-productive and deadly military action. The war in Afghanistan has brought neither security, nor a reduction of terrorist groups, nor freedom for the women of that country. Instead of escalation, we call for U.S. troops to be brought home and a commitment to negotiated diplomatic solutions.

We support organizing within the military and peaceful opposition by those in uniform - including military resisters - to illegal policies of aggressive war, occupation and violations of the Geneva Accords and international standards. This includes strengthening our work with military families, veterans and truth in recruitment efforts, as well as demanding the troops be fully cared for when they get home.

2) Our work for peace and justice will include an action response to the economic, social and environmental crisis at home and worldwide.

The wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan have a direct impact on our domestic realities, and have been key factors in creating the current economic crisis. Hundreds of billions of dollars from our national treasury have been poured into these wars and occupations while social programs at home suffer from massive cuts in funding – New Orleans and the Gulf Coast are still left without desperately needed recovery resources. The cities and towns, bridges, tunnels, schools, hospitals and social services of the country are in disrepair and are headed for greater threats as the economic crisis deepens the crisis in our communities.

Reordering federal budget priorities away from military spending and into programs that address the needs of our communities must be a centerpiece of our efforts. We will address domestic issues tied to the posture of permanent war and empire building, and to the power of the military industrial complex, particularly those that affect vulnerable communities. UFPJ will strengthen our alliances with the economic justice, environmental, student, labor, immigrant rights and other social movements as the basis for a future of peace and justice.

The global financial crisis exposed the bankruptcy of economic policies that devastate communities while enriching an elite few. Through our work we will highlight the undemocratic and elite controls of the economic and military policies of our country. Only by changing the structures that allow a small handful of economically powerful people to control our political systems will we be able to stop wars of aggression and re-direct our national priorities.

The policies of deregulation have gone hand-on-hand with the expansion of militarism. U.S. military spending and debt repayment is the largest expenditure in the federal budget and dwarfs spending for human needs. We cannot solve the problems we face while spending billions on wars. We cannot afford a war economy. The struggles for fair trade, workers rights and sustainable, green economics are decisive in ensuring economic justice and peace for all people.

The need for a radical change in U.S. environmental policy is more urgent than ever. The U.S. government has wasted hundreds of billions of dollars attempting to control non-renewable oil resources in Iraq, while they've been decimating our environment with coal and nuclear plants. This has been a tremendous missed opportunity to invest in a sustainable future for our country and our planet. Iraq and New Orleans are living examples of the U.S. drive for oil and the willingness to sacrifice communities, cities, and even whole countries, to control that oil. Environmental issues go hand-in-hand with issues of war and the economy: global warming, defoliation, depleted uranium, the massive consumption of oil by the U.S. military, etc. Public sentiment is greater than ever for energy conservation and efficiency, clean and renewable energy and sustainable economic

development that includes a commitment to green jobs.

3) We will work to prevent new wars in Pakistan, Iran and elsewhere.

In connection with the NATO occupation of Afghanistan, the U.S military has made military strikes in neighboring Pakistan – killing innocent people - and has threatened further military action. Together with the Israeli government, its closest ally in the region, the U.S. has made threats of military strikes or worse against Iran, actions that could cause countless deaths and regional destabilization and conflict. The U.S. has threatened unilateral action against other sovereign nations around the world. We will work to stop aggressive actions by the U.S. against any country or people.

Threats of war with Iran, Pakistan, Syria, North Korea, Venezuela, Cuba and other countries must be stopped. Obama has promised a rejection of unilateralism and the use of diplomacy to resolve conflict and we will work to ensure he fulfills his promise. We stand against all aggressive wars and call for diplomatic solutions and resolutions of conflict through international frameworks.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons remains a threat to the very existence of human life. U.S. nuclear hypocrisy and hegemony stands in the way of the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide.

4) It is time to challenge the Global War on Terror and the Empire Building Agenda of the U.S.

The so-called “Global War on Terror” is a series of policies that gives cover for U.S. military adventures and efforts aimed at economic control around the world. We will continue to struggle for diplomatic and peaceful solutions to the world’s conflicts and problems.

We will continue to work to end U.S. military and economic aid to Israel that facilitates the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the apartheid policies of the Israeli government. We are alarmed by the possibility of a new arms race with Russia, as well as the expansion of the U.S. military role in Africa represented by the creation of AFRICOM and will be prepared to take action related to developments in that region.

A global movement has emerged to end foreign military bases, first and foremost the 700 U.S. military bases and installations in every corner of the planet, and the militarization of space. We will work in the international No Foreign Bases movement, as well as help develop a more active campaign inside the U.S. calling for ALL of the troops to be brought home!

There are many institutional and policy “pillars of support” for U.S. empire building: legislative support, war profiteering, mainstream media, racism and sexism, the military, dependence on oil, and other factors. To topple these pillars, our activities will articulate and embody a positive vision in which the U.S. replaces strategies of domination with leadership in eliminating poverty and solving the environmental crisis, where a commitment to justice, human rights and workers’ rights and respect for international law and the sovereignty of independent nations are the foundations for a new foreign policy.

NOT PRIORITIES, BUT OTHER IMPORTANT AREAS OF WORK FOR UFPJ

In addition to the strategic priorities outlined above, UFPJ will put energy and resources into work on the following issues when possible. We will support the work of other coalitions and movements who are taking the lead on these and other important struggles.

Defending, protecting and expanding civil liberties and civil rights are necessary steps to ensure our ability to achieve our other strategic goals.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan distort our nation's priorities and are inseparable from the "war at home": the undermining of democracy, and the attacks on immigrants, youth, people of color, the poor, women, LGBT people, and working people.

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Bush Administration, with the support of Congress, implemented a massive assault on civil liberties: the Patriot Act, use of torture, the undoing of Habeas Corpus, extraordinary renditions, widespread wire tapping, spying on peaceful protests and organizers, targeting of Muslims, Arabs and Arab Americans, etc. Both major Presidential candidates pledged to close the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, which has become synonymous with torture and abuse. We must make sure this happens, and that we reverse the attack on civil liberties.

The undermining of civil liberties these past 8 years was a deepening of the general erosion of democracy in the country: the ripping away of voting rights, attacks on the rights of workers and immigrants, attacks on human/civil rights (including those of women, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered (LGBT) people, people of color, and ethnic and religious minorities), and the deepening assault on the environment. The struggle for peace is essentially bound up with the struggle for democracy, and for social and economic justice in the U.S. Building alliances between constituencies based on common needs and solidarity remains essential to winning concrete victories for justice at home and peace around the world.

Our work is guided by a recognition that change comes from the mobilization of massive numbers of people in many, diverse communities using a variety of tactics at all levels. As a broad national coalition we seek to maintain a healthy balance between a program of action to end the war in Iraq and addressing the range of issues that are intimately bound up with the war.