



**United Church
of Canada**



**Canadian Friends
Service Committee**



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

January 26, 2008

Statement in support of the US “war resisters”

We feel compelled to speak out in support of the United States service men and women who have come to Canada seeking refuge following their refusal to participate in the Iraq War.

As people of faith, we understand conscience as an inherent moral faculty, possessed by all people, regardless of class, rank, race, or gender. In Canada, conscientious objector rights have been recognized in law for over 200 years. Since World War II, they have also gained acceptance in many other countries and in international law.

Court martial before a military tribunal and, potentially, years in prison awaits these men and women for their conscientious objection if they are returned to the United States. Canada should not facilitate such a fate for these young men and women. Canada should demonstrate its commitment to international law and protect people who, on grounds of conscience, refuse to participate in war.

The majority of Canadians and the Government of Canada did not support the Iraq war. The Nuremberg principles established that soldiers have a duty, not a choice, to refuse to carry out immoral orders. The UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18) and the UN Handbook for Refugees (Chapter 5, Section B) makes clear that conscientious objectors to war have rights and can require protection from states.

We call on the Canadian government to allow conscientious objectors, and their immediate family members, who have refused or left military service to be able to apply for permanent residency from within Canada.

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