

across the country. The role of young people in organizing demonstrations, vigils and teach-ins dramatically expanded the Palestine solidarity movement in the U.S.

We believe that another revival of antiwar activism can happen. But it will be a movement that is more about U.S. occupation in Southwest Asia and complicity with Israeli aggression than an antiwar movement opposing one specific war. There is no “good” war in Afghanistan and “bad” war in Iraq: both are foreign occupations those populations reject.

Many antiwar groups essentially shut down all activity in 2008 to work at getting out the “peace vote” - meaning votes for Democratic Party candidates - even though they support the continued occupation of Iraq, expanding the military, and boosting troop levels in Afghanistan, not to mention Israel. While we share everyone’s delight that Bush and his policies are gone, the subordination of political principles and focused grass-roots organizing to political expediency doesn’t solve the fundamental problem.

It’s important that we rebuild local antiwar groups on an independent basis, accountable to the demand of immediate withdrawal from both Iraq and Afghanistan. Just as the Gulf War and economic sanctions devastated Iraqi society and paved the way for the invasion six years ago, the United States has long played a destructive role in Afghanistan, hungry for access to Central Asian energy reserves and a military outpost on China’s western border.

Clearly, Afghanistan has been the graveyard of all foreign invaders in the past. It’s hard to imagine that the present beefed-up U.S. force won’t face a similar fate. As Iraq showed, bombing a country into submission is one thing: occupying it is another. Liberation can never be delivered from an invading army! Or, in the words of Shukria Barakzai, a member of Afghanistan’s parliament: “don’t send more troops – it will just bring more violence.”

What are our tasks in rebuilding the movement?

- 1) strengthening the grass-roots of the movement among veterans, soldiers and military families, in unions and communities, and on campuses;
- 2) organizing united, mass demonstrations that clearly demand “Out of Iraq & Afghanistan Now!” and

- 3) educational work about the reality of the wars and occupations, along with connecting Iraq and Afghanistan to Israel/Palestine.

Crucial to our organizing is a campaign to end U.S. military arms to Israel, including the white phosphorus that was illegally used in Gaza. Already, in the wake of Gaza, public criticism of US military aid to Israel has become more open. Arab-American and Muslim communities in many places mobilized like never before, and the identification of American Jews with the state of Israel has begun to slip. Taking inspiration from the victorious movement against South African apartheid, a campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against the Zionist apartheid policies has started to take shape.

It will also be a different antiwar movement in another way, because of the economic meltdown.

The fact is that those of us who live within the empire cannot afford to pay in dollars or in lives for U.S. foreign policy. As long as military spending sucks up nearly half the total budget there can’t be good-paying jobs that rebuild our infrastructure, educate our young or provide decent health care for all.

But in the midst of the economic crisis, too, people are more open to questioning the glories of the market and less willing to die for an empire that enforces it. The antiwar movement has a unique opportunity to demand a “people’s bailout” for all of these things – while pointing out that the military budget starves resources for these critical needs.

One significant opportunity to make these links will be on April 4 in New York City, where United for Peace and Justice is projecting a major demonstration under the theme “*Beyond War, A New Economy is Possible: Yes We Can!*” We need to mobilize again in NYC to build a militant, “*US Out of Iraq and Afghanistan! End the Occupation of Palestine!*” contingent in UFPJ’s march.

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