



The Interfaith Unionsm
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The London Bombings

by David E. McClean

Not long after the second Gulf War one of my good friends and I had a disagreement about the death toll in Iraq. We were, mind you, not talking about the number of dead American or coalition soldiers, but about the number of dead Iraqis - civilians and soldiers alike. But whatever the number, we noted that we rarely see Western corporate media give significant coverage to the real *human* cost measured, as well, by the dead and maimed of Iraq itself.

*A Message
to Members
vol. 1, no 8.*

This month, in London, tragedy struck, although a tragedy long anticipated by both the Left and the Right. The media handling of the London bombings over the next several weeks and months will be interesting to see, as it has already proven interesting. Fewer people died in the several bombings that took place there than die in most two or three week periods in Iraq, but the eyes of powerful Western media interests will be focused on London and will remain so focused in a way that they have never been focused on the more than 100,000 Iraqis who have died due to the immoral war that the US and British governments have led against Iraq under the pretense of bringing freedom to the Iraqi people (or was it to root out terrorism?, or destroy WMD capabilities?, or retaliate for September 11?) - a pretense that, because of its terrible cost, should have led the heads of both governments into impeachment proceedings rather than to re-election, regardless of what one may feel about some of the salutary results of the conflict.

Our hearts rightly break for the families of the victims in London, and for the victims themselves who have had their dreams ended by butchers who have not yet figured out that they cannot possibly win the things that they seek using their preferred methods. Terrorism, like unjust war, violates the basic rules of morality.

But our hearts must also break for the nameless and faceless Iraqis who have suffered at the hands of the US and British governments, or by the civil conditions we caused in Iraq, since the first Gulf War. The number killed or injured since then is much larger than 100,000. Through sanctions and military conflict (and its aftermath), our governments, in the names of the American and British people, share responsibility for the deaths of over 1,000,000 Iraqis. These were mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, tiny infants and adolescents, husbands and wives, friends and lovers, civil servants and professionals. *People*. People with faces. People with dreams. People with passion for life. People just like us. Each one. Each one made in the image of the Great God. Not some huge blob of humanity captured by a large number that we cannot get our imaginations around. One by one they lost their chance to live, to be, to become. They are you and I.

(July 2005 - Vol. 1, No. 8. Note on the image: The tree is a ubiquitous image, found in many faith traditions. It suggests life, power, spiritual growth, and insight. WWW.IUNION.ORG (a New York not-for-profit religious corporation). Copyright © 2005, The Interfaith Union for Progressive Religion. All Rights Reserved.

So as FOX news, CNN and other media outlets bleed dry and spin the story of the London bombings, as they deepen the dangerous idea that the world is, fundamentally, about "Us" vs. "Them" rather than about "We," and as they incite many viewers to anger and hatred by their drumbeat of fear, vengeance and jingoism, let us reflect on the multiple tragedies that affect not just New Yorkers and Londoners, but all of us suffering injustice in the world. Let us reflect on this, as well: Perhaps "bombs bursting in air" and explosions on commuter buses and trains are both the easy way out - the failure of imagination, nerve and commitment that leads to death and more death, rather than to life and more life. May the American and British people learn to mourn not just their own dead, but the dead around the world whose blood flows back to our doorsteps in one way or another, *generation after generation*. For had we had such sensitivities before, had we heard the cries for justice from people all over the Middle East, we would not have the world that we have today. Had we learned that strength and justice are not mutually exclusive, we would not have the world that we have today.

We in the West consistently misunderstand the meaning of greatness when we survey the world's nations. That is because we rest on an immature moral sensibility. A nation whose status in the world is based upon its vast material wealth and military power is not great, but resourceful and generally more secure from external aggression. A nation whose resourcefulness is accompanied by equal measures of compassion, charity and restraint in both its domestic and international dealings is the nation that is truly great. This notion of greatness derives from a higher morality, a morality to which we must aspire, especially those of us who call ourselves people of faith. There are no great nations in the world today, although there are nations with everything it takes to in fact achieve greatness.

Let us mourn with our friends in London. Let us expand our circle of friendship, however, so that we may also mourn with those whom we continue to overlook, and forget.

