

WORLDWIDE ANTIWAR PROTESTS SET FOR MARCH 20

At the World Social Forum in Mumbai, India, a General Assembly of the Antiwar Movement pledged to build for The Global Day of Action Against War and Occupation on March 20. Endorsers include the European Coalitions; Stop the War Coalition in the UK, United for Peace and Justice and ANSWER in the U.S., the Antiwar Coalition in South Africa and the Asian Peace Alliance.

Anti-free trade activists from 32 countries meeting in Havana called for hemisphere-wide protests to coincide with the March 20 demonstrations against the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

To help, contact www.unitedforpeace.com or www.internationalanswer.org.

CENSURE BUSH

Congress has the right to formally reprimand the president for betraying the nation's trust. It's called censure.

MoveOn.org has launched a campaign to censure Bush for "deliberately misrepresenting the truth about intelligence concerning weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and links between Al Qaeda and the government of Saddam Hussein."

In the campaign's first week, 300,000 people signed an online petition. To join in, go to www.moveon.org/censure/.

PATRIOT ACTION

New York City has joined 246 municipalities and counties and three states that have formally opposed provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act. The New York City Council resolution passed on Feb. 4, when it met just a few blocks away from Ground Zero.

On Jan. 27, U.S. District Judge Audrey Collins ruled that a PATRIOT Act ban on providing "expert advice and assistance" to terrorist groups violates the First and Fifth Amendments to the Constitution. The Center for Constitutional Rights argued successfully that groups providing humanitarian support should not be treated as if they were assisting terrorists to build bombs.

The next battleground for the PATRIOT Act is Congress, where a bipartisan bill aims to limit the government's ability to use roving wiretaps, to execute search warrants against suspects without immediately notifying them and to obtain business records from libraries or bookstores in intelligence investigations.

ISRAEL SHUNS WORLD COURT

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced that Israel will not participate in an International Court of Justice hearing about its plan to build a 400-mile barrier that places 15 percent of the Palestinian West Bank on the Israeli side. Sharon said the Court has no authority over the issue, which Israel sees as "terrorism prevention." The U.N. General Assembly asked the Court to rule if the Wall is illegal under international law and should be torn down because it extends Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. The hearing is scheduled for Feb. 28. The Israeli Supreme Court is also holding hearings about the Wall. Two civil rights groups entered petitions saying that construction on occupied land is illegal.

VICTORY FOR ANTIWAR ACTIVISTS

A national outcry forced federal prosecutors to withdraw subpoenas that required Drake University to turn over records from a 2003 antiwar conference called "Stop the Occupation! Bring the Iowa Guard Home!" Subpoenas for testimony from four activists who demonstrated at Iowa National Guard headquarters were also withdrawn. Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin opposed the federal move, saying: "When law-enforcement measures are disproportionate to the activities they target or when they appear to target activities that are legitimate expressions of dissent, then those law-enforcement measures have a chilling effect. They stifle liberty instead of protecting it."

DEADLY DECEPTION

As evidence mounts that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and no immediate threat to justify a pre-emptive war, the blame game has begun. Was the intelligence faulty or was it exaggerated to create a pretext for war? One certainty: whoever becomes the fall guy; there has been a deadly deception.

According to Iraq Body Count, there have been at least 8,235 to 10,079 non-combatant Iraqi civilian deaths as of Feb. 7.

U.S. soldiers are dying at a rate of more than one a day in Iraq. The toll in January was 47, the second highest monthly total since last April when the U.S. invasion was underway. In addition, an estimated nine soldiers have been wounded each day, since the invasion in March 2003.