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"INVEST IN PEACE, SAY NO TO WAR" The war of today is different from the war that we read in history books. Suicide attacks and dramatic bombing of public places and transport anywhere and at any time add to the conventional killing and ethnic cleansing of territorial disputes. Nations, on the least suspicion of the whereabouts of "terrorists or would be terrorists", strike pre-emptively in any location on earth. All these acts create immense fear in all our hearts because we never know when we could become victims of terror. The "war against terrorism" as it is styled brings surreptitious dimensions of war on a global scale. In this war one does not look the enemy in the eye nor have to look for the root causes, or to provide evidence and proof as reasons to go to war.

2. The people who use terror inspiring acts range from seemingly normal individuals who are driven to self sacrifice as lone suicide bombers in pursuit of their convictions, to organised suicidal groups such as the ones who crash aeroplanes into the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre, and to States that blast ordinary people out of their homes from helicopter gunships, bomb impoverished countries to smithereens, shoot stone- throwing children and deny people the exercise of their basic human rights.

3. Today's war defies all logic. War against who and for what? Where is the battleground? The USA says, "You are either with us or against us". However, there are too many inconsistencies in the decisions to go to war for us to give support consistently. When the world supported the War in Afghanistan it was with the understanding that the oppressive regime will be overthrown followed by the reconstruction of Afghanistan and that Al Qaeda will be destroyed. Today the Taliban regime is no more in control (at least in Kabul) but the process of reconstruction has hardly begun. Osama bin Laden remains elusive and Al Qaeda is far from being dismantled. Outside Kabul the lawlessness and conflicts continue unabated.

4. Despite the apparent failure in Afghanistan the world is again asked to join a coalition to fight a War against Iraq. If this is a war against terror, then where is the link between Iraq and Al Qaeda, the terror we vowed to destroy in Afghanistan? If the reason for war is that Iraq is in possession of weapons of mass destruction, then why have we not declared war with North Korea, a rogue state according to the US, which has admitted to possessing these weapons? If the reason for war is because Iraq is violating UN Security Council resolutions then why have we not declared war with Israel, a persistent violator of UN Security Council resolutions? If President Saddam is the problem, then why have we not brought him to the international court to answer for his "crimes"? Why punish the entire Iraqi nation? 5. Despite the lack of convincing evidence and the inconsistent arguments for war, the US and Britain have geared up their troops in the desert. Are we to repeat what we did in Afghanistan? There, all types of missiles were launched from land, air and sea, including from submarines that were thousands of miles away, reaching their targets with incredible accuracy.

Unfortunately when they caused severe disruption and damage to targets, they also killed innocent civilians and maimed survivors. In today's war more than 75 percent of all casualties are non-combatants, callously referred to as collateral damages. No one counts the number of deaths nor estimates gender proportions, but it seems plausible to assume that when a war reaches the civilian population and is brought to peoples' homes, more women and children will be killed or maimed than before. Are we to just stand by and allow these collateral damages to be inflicted on the innocent Iraqi population again? 6. Let us be reminded that in today's war on terror nobody wants to talk about the real reason for the conflict

and honestly deal with it. If the conflict is of no interest to the superpowers the killing can go on for years, even under the watchful eyes of the UN, as can be witnessed in the trouble spots of Africa. In 1995, when leading the Malaysian delegation to the 4th UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, I had raised the issue of inadequate international responses to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina when hundreds of thousands were being massacred without even the right to self-defence because of the arms embargo.

7. Even when the conflict is of interest to the superpowers, they can turn a blind eye to the daily massacre of civilians. In retaliation to suicide bombing for example, Israel unleashes a fury of firepower with impunity and in the process demolish homes and kill innocent women and children. Why are we not asked to join a coalition against this terror? 8. Why are we not looking at the Palestine-Israel conflict as the root cause of all our current efforts in the war against terrorism? While there is no link between Iraq and Al Qaeda, there is certainly a link between Iraq and Palestine. Is the war about disarming Iraq so that it will not pose a threat to Israel and those who protect her? In that case when will war be declared on all Arab or Muslim countries because they all have physical if not moral links with Palestine? Already Muslims in the US and those visitors from Arab and Muslim countries are being persecuted. We are getting close to the danger zone if the madness of military threat is not stopped. A future with threat is no Peace. No one is safe. After Afghanistan, it is Iraq, after Iraq who next? 9. War is futile even for enforcing Peace. Such "peace" will not be more than temporary if the peacekeeping efforts are conducted without negotiations over the real issues underlying the conflict. Rather than using military force and threat, human security and peaceful settlement can be better achieved through comprehensive means, which include humanitarian responses and agendas for development, human rights and the environment.

10. Just like war, economic sanctions is another futile effort for peace. Questions have been raised about the wisdom and the effectiveness of sanctions as a tool of international law enforcement. I would like to relate the impact of the comprehensive economic sanctions that have been imposed on Iraq since 1990.

In March 2000, I led a group of ten women from socially active NGOs to Iraq to observe first-hand the humanitarian effects of such prolonged economic sanctions on the life of the Iraqi people who have undergone a preceding ten year conflict.

11. Despite the oil-for-food programme and humanitarian aid introduced in 1996, we were convinced that the development process in Iraq has been interrupted or even halted by the sanctions. Her people suffer from insufficient food and health care, unsafe water, poor sanitation and inadequate infrastructure.

Mortality in children has doubled, especially from preventable diseases such as diarrhea and respiratory infections. Maternal mortality has risen because of anemia and inadequate drugs as well as equipment for proper care during pregnancy and delivery. Old diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases are re-emerging because of the lack of resources for adequate preventive measures as well as drugs and facilities for their treatment. A significant number of children are dropping out of school because children are required to work to supplement the family income. Schools are in deplorable conditions.

Infrastructure is severely damaged with daily electricity cuts, and deteriorating quality of water and sanitation standards. Families share homes on an eight hour shift. The lifestyle of the people have

changed with many young couples postponing marriages because weddings are too expensive and performing the obligatory Haj is out of reach to many Iraqis. A whole generation of innocent Iraqi children are being brought up and are learning about life in an unhealthy social and psychological environment, which does not nurture their development. There are already evidence of juvenile delinquency, depression and intense hatred for the west. These children are not going to see the Americans as liberators and neither are they going to welcome the American soldiers with open arms.

12. On a more general note I would like to reiterate that war has many other adverse impacts on women, children and families. Women constitute 70 percent to 80 percent of the world's refugee population*. At least two million Arab children are refugees, and nearly four million are displaced. As internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees, women's dominant struggle is how to cope with extreme poverty and to stretch meager resources to reduce their children's hunger of poverty.

They are often exploited to perform menial tasks or sell their bodies. They are also more vulnerable to domestic violence.

13. Female-related diseases are often left untreated in situations of war, because male combatants are accorded priority. Diseases may be the result of rape (e.g. HIV and AIDS), malnutrition, extreme work loads, the hardship of a conflict and prolonged stress. Long after the combatants have made their peace, women and children who are victims of chemical warfare such as agent orange and landmines struggle with their lives.

Radioactive materials such as depleted uranium in warheads cause leukaemia and congenital anomalies, stillbirths and missed abortions. During war, victims are also exposed to abuse, torture, psychological trauma, imprisonment and separation from their families.

14. If they are not killed, women are at risk to rape, forced to serve as prostitutes over extensive periods of time or live as husband and wife with soldiers and threatened with death if they attempted to leave. The UN Human Rights Commission has estimated that for every 100th pregnancy during a conflict, rape has been committed. These figures do not give a full picture, as they do not include rapes, which did not lead to pregnancy, rapes which led to pregnancy which was followed by abortion, and rapes followed by killing or death. More disturbing is the use of rape as a weapon of war. In the ethnic cleansing war in the former Yugoslavia, rape was not only a catalyst for deporting non-Serb inhabitants, but was also used as a genocide tool to destroy the biological basis of a given nation's culture, either by a forced pregnancy or by inhibiting women from having children in the future.

Many women had to undergo the life-long torture of bearing the enemy's child and nurturing it for years to come.

15. Another adverse impact of war is the disturbing trend of children being systematically brutalised and forcibly used as soldiers. Once conscripted the children's loyalty is maintained through drugs and violence. If they try to escape, they are punished by branding and amputation.

16. War is expensive, and poverty is a common characteristic of post-conflict countries. Protecting against a soldier-portable wide-area smart mine costs US\$297,000 - which would buy three million packets of oral rehydration therapy for diarrheal illnesses. To buy a land mine costs US\$3-10 but to remove one costs US\$300-1000. Resources spent on warfare deprive children of developmental rights and opportunities in health, education, social welfare and basic human needs.

17. It is time to look again at the peace process and the diplomacy in conflict resolution. In most instances women become directly involved in warfare only after crucial political decisions have been made, after weapons have been distributed and the war has started and at which point they do not have the power to change the situation. It is time for women to influence the decisions that create war, the conduct of war and in post-conflict situations.

18. Women's voices create a potential for different concepts of security, disarmament and world order. This is because women's morality is associated with an emphasis on love relationships dominated by an ethics of care and on how their decisions would affect the community at large. For women, the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights as well as participatory democracy are more important than developing new and more sophisticated forms of weapons.

In bringing values of economic and social justice, non discrimination and replacing oppression, racism, extremism, fanaticism, violence and enemy-images with inter-cultural understanding, solidarity and respect for human rights women can transform the view of power, security, disarmament and world order. Thus women's way of thinking brings hopes and better opportunities for lasting peace.

19. The 1985 Nairobi conference was the first time that feminist reflections, concerns, and vocabulary concerning peace were made explicit in a major UN document. At the fourth world conference on women in Beijing in 1995, the theme of gender, peace and conflict was even more central and at least three sections of the Beijing Platform for action deal with peace and conflict.

20. Let me conclude by saying that the "war against terrorism" is ill defined, the root causes are not addressed and the reasons for war are inconsistently applied. In the mean time all of us are under siege of deep fear because we can all be vulnerable to suicide bombings and unilateral preemptive strikes with weapons of mass destruction that are unleashed with no impunity at any time and in any place. Warfare is a system that pervades our lives and affects every aspect of society from the structural to the interpersonal. Women and children are the people most directly affected by the horrors of war. We must say NO TO WAR.

21. In accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that calls for equal representation of women at all decision-making levels, and valuing women's potential to build a lasting culture of peace in their multiple roles as activists, mothers, community leaders, professionals, widows and breadwinners I urge all parties including the United Nations and the media to resolve conflicts through the UN system and to include and seek women's views, their concerns and experiences in all stages of the mediation

and negotiations of the peace process, including the responses to armed conflicts, efforts to sustain peace and capacity building.