



Iraqi-Canadian Society

For Writing-off Iraqi Debts

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Prime Minister

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Dear Sirs,

Your Excellency, allow me to refer you to news reports regarding the recent Paris Club group of creditors' offer to cancel 80% of their claims against Iraq, and your country's position regarding that offer. As advocates of the Iraqi people, we would like to draw your kind attention to the following fact: "All Iraqi people and their religious and secular leaders support the cancellation of Saddam's odious debts and the cancellation of all compensation claims awarded by the United Nations Compensation Commission".

From October to December 2004, we traveled around Iraq holding meetings, discussions, and seminars: In the Holy city of Najaf we met the highest three Ayatollah Scholars of Shiats Muslims in the World: Their Highnesses Saied Ali Al Sistani, Mohammad Saed Al Hakim and Basheer Al Najafi. They argue that the so-called civilized and democratic governments should not request the repayment of these odious debts from the new Iraqi government and all support the writing off of those debts which are currently claimed against the oppressed people of Iraq. Also Ayatollah's Al Hakim went further to say: "*The creditors committed an act of oppression against the people of Iraq by providing Saddam's regime with these funds...There is no question about the odious nature of these debts*".

In Baghdad, we met most of the Iraqi political party leaders, such as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the Communist Party, the Constitutional Monarchy. We organized the drafting of two important documents from the Iraqi National Assembly

and the Iraqi Jurists Union (copies attached). Both of these Statements were voted on by these respective bodies and approved **unanimously**. It is clear that all the representatives of the Iraqi people are calling for a moratorium on Iraq's odious debts and reparations payments.

We had also meetings with Dr. Adil Mehdi, the Minister of Finance, and Dr. Al Shibibi, the Governor of the Central Bank, both of whom acknowledge the odiousness of Saddam's debts and Party, the Turkoman Islamic Party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, Al Ouma, and the Al Dawa parties agree that the Iraqi people should not be held responsible for these debts. However, in their official capacity, they have little choice but to negotiate through Paris Club and IMF channels. They assured us, however, that they will negotiate bilaterally for a larger debt reduction than the 80% offered. In fact, in December 2004 the United States wrote off 100% its \$4.1 billion claims against Iraq dating back to the Saddam era. Russia has written off 92%-93% of its claims against Iraq. We expect UK, Canada, and Australia will follow suit.

As you aware, your previous regime lent Saddam Hussein, Iraq's dictator, some millions of US dollars. These funds financed his war machine which he used against his own people and against our neighbors. The debts created for such purposes are odious, according to natural and international laws, and thus are not legally enforceable. We believe Iraq should resolve its debt crisis through arbitration according to the rule of law. We will vigorously urge the new elected Iraqi administration to reject responsibility for the debt incurred by Saddam's regime until creditors submit proof of the legitimacy of the debts, i.e. that the debts were used in the interest of the Iraqi people, with their knowledge and consent. We will argue that this test be applied to all debts claimed by Paris Club and non Paris Club members alike.

All the winning Iraqi political parties stated in their policy platforms that they will treat Iraq's economic crisis as a priority. Several parties state their intention to work for a complete cancellation of Iraq's foreign debt and the elimination of war reparations resulting from Saddam Hussein's military campaigns.

On January 20, 2005, the Bulgarian news agency (BTA) reported that Finance Minister Milen Velchev has returned from meeting with US and IMF officials. "Conferring with US Congressman Robert Wexler (Democrat of Florida), Velchev discussed Bulgaria's desire to recover a larger share of its Iraqi debt than the portion agreed by the Paris Club." Your Finance Minister made this comment, despite the fact that your Defence Minister Nikolay Svinarov admitted last year that "No one disputes the fact that half of the Iraqi debt to Bulgaria is the result of arms exports."

We Iraqis therefore, will urge that any offer of less than 100% debt cancellation be rejected. No authority and approval will be allowed or granted to accept any deal that is less than the 100% cancellation. Iraq should and will resolve its debt crisis, not by pleading for mercy from its creditors but, according to the rule of law, through a fair and transparent arbitration process. The good relations that have prevailed in the past between our two nations, which have been based on friendship and understanding, will be

seriously harmed by your government's refusal to understand the current Iraqi position and to immediately liquidate all claims against our people.

We are asking your Excellency, to request that your government make public all details of Bulgaria's claims against Iraq. Then, you and all the good people of Bulgaria may judge the nature of the financing your government provided to the regime of Saddam Hussein. Your government supplied Iraq, mostly with weapons, military materials and equipment. These items encouraged Saddam to wage his wars against our neighbors. You should know that your military assistance was the bullets which inflicted death and destruction. This resulted in further claims for compensation from those suffering the consequences of Saddam's wars. These claims granted by UNCC amounted to US\$ 48.8 billion, of which US\$18 billion has already been deducted from our oil revenues. These are funds desperately needed by the Iraqi people to rebuild their economy.

We hereby request that you reconsider your Government's position and take firm action to write-off your debt claims, as the Iraqi people cannot be held responsible for the crimes committed under the Saddam regime.

The Iraqi people have been by far the greatest victims of Saddam's aggression. It is not fair or just to ask them to pay the debt and reparations for their tormentor's crimes. The Iraqi ability to pay from its vast natural resources does not legitimize the debts that your Government extended to the worst dictatorship regime in the world. Our people still live in such extreme poverty and need every penny to solve the social and economic hardship suffered over the past 35 years.

The future of our good relations is at stake and we request your support to rebuild our nation free from occupation. We hope your generosity will surpass that of the U.S.'s. Take the moral high ground by being seen as one of the leading countries on the cancellation of Saddam's debt. Translate your attitude to action and let the Iraqi people recognize his real friends.

Best regards,

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Iraqi / Canadian Society for writing Off Iraqi Debts- Canada,
Director, Iraq Representative, Jubilee Iraq

Ottawa, 07 March, 2005