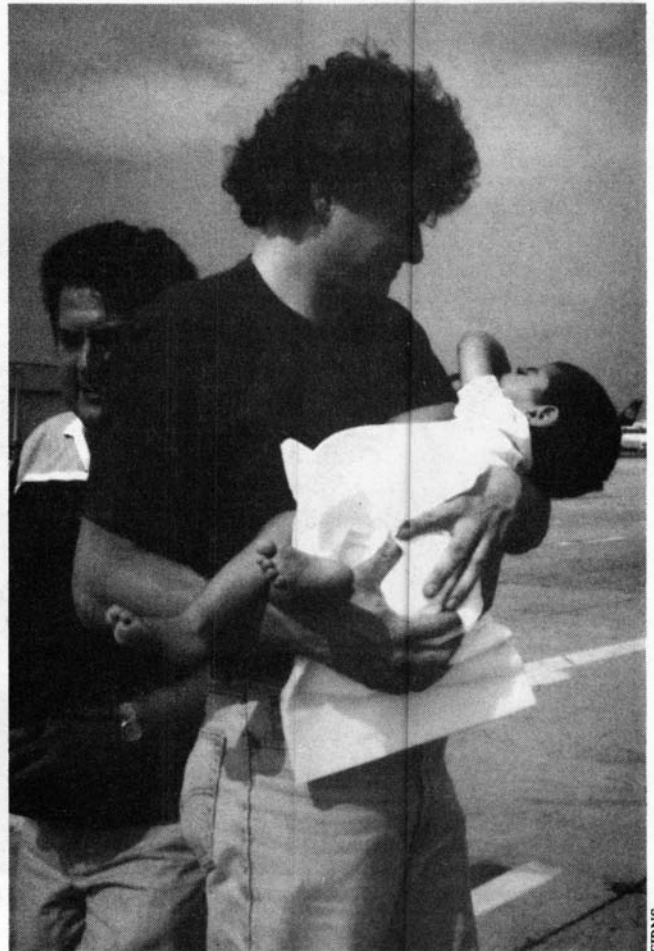


IPO: Iraq is being denied the right to life

The International Progress Organization (IPO) on Aug. 13 submitted to the 43rd session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, a memorandum on the human rights aspect of the continuation of economic sanctions against Iraq. The IPO's delegate, Warren Hamerman, addressed the Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination. The following are excerpts from his speech:

A grave and systematic violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms is being carried out against the entire population of Iraq, in form and dimensions without precedent. The most basic right, the right to life, is being denied in fact to 18 million people by the continuation of the sanctions policy, implemented through the United Nations Security Council. That such a policy be carried out on the basis of decisions made by a U.N. organ is unprecedented in the history of the U.N., as it involves a total boycott, following the deliberate destruction of Iraq's infrastructure. A further special feature of this case is that the violation is being carried out not by a national government, but by an intergovernmental body against the population of a member state of the U.N. . . .

The most egregious example of violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms committed through the sanctions policy against Iraq is constituted by the fact that the population is being deprived of food, water, and medicine required to keep it alive. According to the July 1991 report issued by the inter-agency task force led by the U.N. Secretary General's Executive Delegate, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan . . . "the impact of the sanctions had been, and remains, very substantial on the economy and living conditions of its civilian population." Specifically, the report details that "damage to water treatment plants and the inability to obtain needed spare parts have cut off an estimated two and one-half million Iraqis from the government system they relied upon before the war." Those who still receive water "are now provided on average with one-quarter the pre-war amount per day," much of it "of doubtful quality." As a result of the destruction of the sewage system, "raw sewage [is] now flowing in some city streets and into the rivers. Diarrheal diseases, thought to be caused by water and sewage problems, are now at four times the level of a year ago. The country is already experiencing outbreaks of typhoid and cholera."



A German doctor from the Hammer-forum welcomes an Iraqi child suffering from an eye injury, upon arrival at the Frankfurt Airport.

Due to the lack of supplies, electricity, water and medicines, according to the same report, the health system is hamstrung. Iraq used to import up to \$500 million a year for medicines and medical supplies, which it has not been able to receive since August 1990 due to the embargo. The report stresses that, since humanitarian agencies lack the financial means to meet this demand, "Mechanisms need to be urgently established for the country to procure its own medical supplies and to maintain its equipment in operation. Failing this, the health situation will further worsen."

A similar picture emerges regarding the food supply problem. The U.N. Executive Delegate's report indicates "this year's aggregate cereal production will be around one-third of last year's," increasing dependence on imports, which was 70% before the war. What food is available is beyond the reach of all but the very wealthy, as wheat and rice prices have increased by 45 and 22 times respectively. Malnutrition is widespread especially among children, pregnant women and lactating mothers. "Taken collectively, this information clearly demonstrates a widespread and acute



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Medical personnel prepare to transport an injured Iraqi child from the Frankfurt Airport to a German hospital for emergency treatment.

food supply crisis, which if not averted through timely intervention, will gradually but inexorably cause massive starvation throughout the country.”

Power generating capacity, restored to 25% of pre-war levels, is precarious, as it depends on use of cannibalized spare parts. . . .

In sum, the situation in postwar Iraq can be characterized as similar to that of a medieval city under siege: Cut off from outside assistance, its population, deprived of adequate food, water, medical care and the means to produce for its subsistence, is condemned to perish. It is only a matter of time. According to a May 1991 Harvard Study Team report, most affected are the children; the report estimates that 55,000 additional children under the age of five had already died as a result and that a further 170,000 will die this year.

It must be said that the members of the U.N. Security Council bear a personal, moral, and legal responsibility for the grave consequences of the continuation of the sanctions because they have been duly informed of the findings of the Harvard Study Team report, as well as of the U.N. Executive Delegate’s task force, which urgently recommended lifting the embargo. In addition, the IPO sent a letter to the Chairman of the Sanctions Committee (4 July 1991) and to the Secretary General of the United Nations (24 May 1991),

drawing attention to the fact “that continuation of the United Nations boycott against Iraq gravely endangers the health and livelihood of the whole Iraqi people (whether Arab or Kurdish) and especially of the children.” That letter stressed the fact that no basis for the continuation of the sanctions existed, following the restoration of Kuwaiti sovereignty, in accordance with paragraph 2 of Resolution 661 (1990). It further stated that even Resolution 687 (1991), though expanding on the earlier resolution, “does not link the issue of sanctions to any conditions related to the internal political situation in Iraq.” Yet, two permanent members of the Security Council “have hinted that they intend to use their veto power to link the lifting of the sanctions to certain political conditions,” in contradiction to the U.N. Charter and in “blatant interference in the internal affairs of Iraq.”

I submit to the world community represented here, that a human tragedy of immense proportions is unfolding in Iraq, not due to natural causes, but to the decisions made by committees of the United Nations itself. The IPO demands that this anomalous case of systematic violations of human rights, as defined by the very humanitarian principles enshrined in the U.N. Charter, be brought before the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and that the Commission then urge the Security Council to desist from such a policy.