

Speech for 20-03 2003 event: International Women's Day  
8 March 2006 Martin Place, 12.45  
Rev. Dr. Ann Wansbrough

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people and the Eora nation, and pay respect to those who cared for this land from time immemorial.

We remember particularly on this International Women's Day all Australia's Indigenous women who over the last two centuries have worked for peace, justice and reconciliation in this land.

**“women say the time for peace is now”**

We are here, because 20-03 2003 is the most important date in recent history – the day we went to war against a nation that was not attacking us.

This event is part of events over 20 days in the lead up to the 20<sup>th</sup> March, anniversary of the war on Iraq, in which community peace groups come here to remind Australians and the US consulate that the war on Iraq was and is wrong.

20-03 2003 is the day we Australians, in all our diversity, must remember;  
the day we must confess;  
the day we must learn from;  
the day we must never repeat.

20-03 2003 was and is a day of shame for the Coalition of the Willing.

War never has been and never will be the way to bring safety to women and children in Iraq or anywhere else.

20-03 2003 is the day Australia collaborated with the bombing of cities and towns where women and children, young people and old, were living

the day Australia ignored the United Nations charter and the decisions of the Security Council

the day Australia deserted the rule of law

the day Australia started to live, as a nation, by fear and not by hope

the day illusion and lies took over from reality.

The Prime Minister's own website listed the weapons of mass destruction

The weapons that did not exist.

The weapons that we all knew did not exist

As we went on the streets time and again

To say: we will not live by fear

We will not live by the blood of Iraqi sisters and  
brothers.

20-03 2003 is a day of shame because it was based on a lie.

How dare our government go to war on the basis of a lie.

Not in our name we said then.

Not in our name we say now.

Not in the name of women.

Not in the name of millions of Australians.

20-03 2003 is a day of shame because it was a day of hypocrisy – several hypocrisies.

The dictator to whom the US had given weapons became the excuse to attack a nation already weakened by sanctions.

That hypocrisy was bad enough.

But we now know that Australia had its own hypocrisy

While women and children in Iraq died as a result of sanctions, the AWB poured money into the pockets of the powerful in Iraq, in defiance of the UN.

And then Australia went to war claiming we wanted to rescue people and to stop Saddam Hussein from defying the UN.

What hypocrisy.

War never has been and never will be the way to bring safety to women and children in Iraq or anywhere else.

War has never been the way of founding a democracy.

Almost 70 nations have become democracies in the last 30 years.

Research<sup>1</sup> shows that the strength of the democracy depends on the strength of the civil society, non-violent movements that created the democracy.

Only peace-building, not war-mongering, can create a society where it is safe for people to live.

We stand in solidarity with the women of Iraq, urging that everyone, in Australia, in the USA, in Iraq itself, listen to the voices of women.

Peace cannot develop if women are not equal participants in the process.

Peace cannot develop as long as troops of invading nations remain present.

I stand here as a Christian minister, from the Uniting Church, to tell you that this war is not religious.

The God worshipped by the Australian churches does not support this war.

The only God worth believing in is a God who supports peace and justice and opposes war.

So the churches questioned this war.

War never has been and never will be the way to bring safety to women and children in Iraq or anywhere else.

We will live by hope, and offer hope and peace to the women of Iraq. We long for them to live in safety.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for listening.

God bless you all in your commitment to justice and peace.

---

<sup>1</sup> Freedom House, *How Freedom is Won: From Civic Struggle to Durable Democracy*, Washington DC, 2005. Available online at [http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special\\_report/29.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special_report/29.pdf) (note: 3MB download)