

Dear Prime Minister,

Five peace-building civil society organizations, The Group of 78, Project Ploughshares, the Rideau Institute, Peacebuild, and World Federalists, respectfully submit our concerns regarding your Government's proposal to take military action against Islamic State.

Canada's response to Islamic State: alternatives to the use of force

We, the undersigned representatives of Canadian peace-building civil society organizations, wholly endorse the views expressed by Project Ploughshares in the attached statement.

We welcome parliamentary debate on the government's proposed military intervention by Canada in Iraq. We have serious reservations about the effectiveness of the bombing campaign and deep concerns about its negative consequences for innocent civilians. The use of force is more likely to fuel the extremism underpinning the conflict, rather than defeating it. If the intervention nonetheless proceeds as proposed, we demand full transparency by the government before, during and after the mission.

Instead of military intervention, we would recommend diplomatic solutions to end the conflict, under the auspices of the United Nations and fully consistent with international law, despite the frustrations such initiatives would inevitably entail.

We believe that the main objective of intervention should be to protect vulnerable civilians, to provide humanitarian aid and emergency supplies to distressed populations, and to strengthen the observance of human rights for all people in the Middle East.

The military mission may help reduce the atrocities committed by the IS in the short term, but recent experience in Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq itself suggests that in the longer term it may only make the situation worse. As the Group of 78 stated after its 2012 conference on Afghanistan, our objective should be to help bring about sustainable peace and security. This will take dedicated efforts working to strengthen the capacities of states and civil society in the region and it will take time, but it is the only effective alternative to the use of force.

October 5, 2014

Signed by:

Roy Culpeper, Chair, Group of 78
Peggy Mason, Chair, Peacebuild
John Siebert, Executive Director, Project Ploughshares
Peggy Mason, President, Rideau Institute
Fergus Watt, Executive Director, World Federalists