

Leichhardt Peace Group



Stop War - Start Peace

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2nd November 2005

Mr Kofi Annan
Secretary General
UN Headquarters S-3800
NY 10017 USA

Dear Mr Annan

Firstly, we would like to convey our appreciation and thanks for your continued expressions of peace for all and your advocacy on behalf of disadvantaged peoples globally.

The Leichhardt Peace Group is one of many peace and justice community activist groups operating within Sydney and Australia. We advocate for peace and justice within our community and the wider world. We are active within our community including hosting community forums that have raised awareness of the suffering of the Iraqi people, mandatory detention of refugees in Australia and the scapegoating of Australian Muslims. We use films, documentaries and out-spoken voices speaking from the very heart of our nation. Unfortunately these voices are not mirrored by all of our political leaders. Our goal is to raise our community's understanding of the need for world-wide peace, justice and humanity due to the consequences of centuries of imposed imperialism that continues to this day, with the added dire threat that climate change poses for all peoples, we believe that it is imperative that peace is achieved and maintained.

The Australian national government, in its attempt to address terrorism, intends to introduce draconian Anti-Terrorism laws without public debate and without consensus. It is with a sense of urgency that we bring to your attention the direct attacks on human rights that Australians face as a result of this legislation.

We believe that should these laws be passed:

- Australians will be subject to secret arbitrary detention and innocent people will be detained paving the way to a Police State as warned by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission President, Mr John Von Doussa;

- Politicisation of the judiciary and the police will occur as warned by leading lawyers;
- Minority groups, particularly those in the Muslim community, will be further subjected to undue and unjust scrutiny which will undermine our successfully multi-cultural society;
- the laws will be used to reduce free speech, including that of the media, silencing opposition to government; and
- Australian society will be reduced to one of mistrust and fear.

The proposed legislation not only validates fear but encourages racism within the community. Our national government, and indeed politicians from the other major party, appear intent on ignoring the growing level of concern and unease amongst the Australian community. The Leichhardt Peace Group, like many other organisations, rejects and condemns the proposed legislation as unjust, oppressive and a violation of the *UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and other UN conventions that Australia has ratified including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

The Leichhardt Peace Group intends to continue with our peaceful activities past and beyond the enactment of this legislation. However, serious concerns have been raised regarding the proposed sedition clauses and the silencing of peaceful community groups such as ours. We respectfully request that you refer the proposed anti-terrorism legislation to the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* to assess and monitor the impact of these laws on the Australian people.

Yours in Peace and Justice

The Leichhardt Peace Group