

Four Anglican bishops want Iraq war apology: Bishops say democracy cannot be imposed by force

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Four senior Anglican bishops have suggested that the Church of England arrange a meeting of Muslim and Christian leaders to initiate an apology by Western countries involved in the war in Iraq.

The initiative is contained in a 100-page document prepared by a working group under the leadership of the bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, and published September 19.

It points to a “a long litany of errors in the West’s handling of Iraq” and urges “a clear public recognition of the way that the West has contributed to the present tragic situation.” It says the church can play a role because governments are unlikely to express remorse.

Daud Abdullah, deputy general secretary of the Muslim Council of Great Britain, said: “This appears to be a positive initiative which could go a long way in helping to alleviate misunderstanding. I look forward to studying the detail.”

A spokesperson for the British prime minister’s office said it would not comment on the report.

The report, “Countering Terrorism: Power, Violence and Democracy Post 9/11,” criticizes U.S. foreign policy, the war on terror and some U.S. Christians’ use of biblical texts to support a political agenda in the Middle East. Notes the report: “We suggest that the United States, like all major powers in history, does indeed seek to expand its economic and military influence and power. What distinguishes it from many other empires in history, is its strong sense of moral righteousness. In this there is both sincere conviction and dangerous illusion.”

The bishops also say that the Western style of democracy cannot be imposed on other countries by force. "We believe that the churches have an important role to play, not simply in urging the importance and applicability of Christian principles," they said, "but in a proper awareness of the role of religion, for good as well as ill, and initiatives it might take towards reconciliation between adversaries." –

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