As Iraqis head to the polls, citizens worldwide join EPIC in urging Obama to do more to support peace in Iraq

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington, DC – Concerned citizens around the world are joining the US-based Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) in demanding that President Barack Obama and Congress devote more attention to Iraq and the region.

Iraq is facing the worst violence since 2008. Over the past 12 months, political violence has claimed more than 10,000 lives, including families in markets and children while attending their schools. In recent months, over 71,500 families have been forced to flee their homes in and around Fallujah and Ramadi in Iraq’s western province of Anbar, adding to more than a million Iraqis who remain displaced by years of war. At the same time, Iraq is hosting as many as 250,000 Syrian refugees.

Founded in 1998 and led by US veterans and humanitarian advocates, EPIC is an independent non-profit organization working to advance Iraq’s peace and development through innovative research, advocacy, and youth empowering field work and partnerships on the ground in Iraq.

EPIC launched its Campaign to Put Iraq Back on the Agenda using Change.org, the world’s fastest growing platform for social change. The campaign has attracted 11.5K supporters from around the world, of which more than 8.5K are citizens from across the United States.

“As the lead country that started the war in Iraq, we have a strong national interest and moral obligation to do more to help end the violence,” declared EPIC director Erik K. Gustafson. “We ought to be doing more to further Iraq’s prospects for peace, while helping vulnerable populations who are most affected by the violence and instability that we left behind.”

Delivered to President Obama, top officials in his administration, and Congressional leaders just days ahead of Iraq’s pivotal April 30th national parliamentary elections, the petition calls on the Obama administration to articulate a clear, long-term strategy for peace in Iraq and the region. Support for the petition came from a wide variety of people, including U.S. veterans of the Iraq war, Iraqi Americans and Iraqi nationals, aid workers, and young people from around the world.

Following the 2011 withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, the “civilian surge” promised by the Obama administration was short-lived. While US assistance to Iraq in FY 2012 exceeded $530 million, by FY 2013, actual US spending on Iraq had fallen to $104 million. The President’s budget request for FY 2015 continues that alarming trend.

“Helping to advance peace in Iraq is a clear case where our moral obligations and security priorities coincide,” explains EPIC Board President Soren Sudhof. “There are a range of relatively low-cost, low-risk policy options for improving Iraq’s prospects for peace and stability. We ought to be making those targeted investments right now, and not waiting until it’s too late.”

Signature total and messages from petition supporters from EPIC’s campaign on Change.org: https://www.change.org/petitions/president-obama-put-iraq-back-on-the-agenda

###

For additional information or to schedule an interview, contact EPIC Program Associate Taif Jany at (202) 682-0208 or via email at taif@epic-usa.org