

## East Bay Citizens for Peace Statement

September 16, 2014

The United States is now engaging in yet another war in the Middle East. We initially invaded Iraq in 2003 because of the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction, which we now know did not exist. Additionally, we intervened in Libya in 2011 and left that country in turmoil. We continued the war on al-Qaeda principally through drone strikes against selected targets in Yemen and Somalia. Last week, President Obama announced further military engagement against ISIS, an extremist group of about 20,000 - 30,000 Sunni Muslims, occupying parts of Iraq and Syria.

We believe that a war against ISIS will prove to be counter-productive. Violence begets violence and every air strike we make against ISIS leads to new recruits. We need to urge all involved countries to engage in diplomacy.

East Bay Citizens for Peace strongly opposes the seemingly endless war(s) we are pursuing in the Middle East. Our wars have only brought on additional violence and diminished our ability to affect events and improve the lives of the people.

We urge Congress to assume its constitutional responsibility and debate this war. Only Congress has the power to declare war. Congress needs to include in their debate non-military approaches to deal with the problems of the Middle East. This should include:

- Addressing political, economic and social grievances of local populations
- Providing humanitarian aid where needed
- Encouraging Iraq to include Sunnis, Kurds and other interest groups in its government
- Encouraging President Assad to respond to the grievances raised by his opponents
- Involving other interested parties in Europe and the Middle East as well as the UN in addressing the turmoil in the Middle East which has resulted in the relocation of over three million people
- Renewing our commitment to the Geneva Conventions and urging other nations to do so as well
- Assessing not only the human cost of war but also the financial cost of war in billions of dollars, funds that could be invested in restoring our country's economy and infrastructure.