

**18 October, 2009**

**War Resisters Support Campaign**

**Statement Regarding the Situation of Rodney Watson**

The War Resisters Support Campaign is a network of volunteers working together to provide assistance to members of the U.S. military seeking refuge in Canada as a result of their opposition to the illegal war in Iraq. Groups exist in many centres across the country and include a wide diversity of age and origin including many former U.S. citizens welcomed to our country during the Vietnam era.

The Campaign was initiated following the arrival of Jeremy Hinzman in 2004, the first of the new generation of conscientious resisters. Our work has focused primarily on assisting these young men and women in the legal aspect of their search for refuge in Canada, and in lobbying for a provision to be enacted that would ensure that US Iraq War resisters are allowed to remain in Canada rather than face imprisonment or forced participation in an illegal war.

The War Resisters Support Campaign works within the Canadian legal and political systems. We also work in consultation with, and respect for, each individual resister with regard to their wishes and choices. With respect to Rodney Watson's decision to request and accept sanctuary from the congregation of the First United Church we are appreciative of the church members' courageous moral stance.

We are also in agreement that this choice, by both Rodney and the church, is consistent with Canadian traditions and values of peaceful resistance to unjust decisions by government. We reiterate that through two majority votes, Parliament has called on the Government of Canada to stop the deportation of these war resisters. This reflects the majority view in this country as expressed in recent opinion polls. Yet the Canadian government has chosen to ignore both Parliament's will, and the will of Canadians.

It would be unconscionable to deport Rodney Watson, separating him from his Canadian fiancée and son, after Canadians and their political representatives have spoken so clearly. The punishment faced by resisters who have already been forced back to the US by the Conservative government has been exceptionally harsh because they spoke out against the war – a war that Canada chose not to participate in. This is the fate that certainly awaits Rodney if he is forced back to the US against his will.

We urge all Canadians who agree with Rodney's decision not to participate in the Iraq War, to support the stand he and the First United Church have taken. Write, email, phone or personally contact your Member of Parliament and urge them to call on the Government of Canada to respect the will of Parliament and lift the threat of deportation against Rodney Watson.

Urge Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney to halt all efforts to deport Rodney Watson and all the other resisters facing persecution if forced back into the United States.

**[www.resisters.ca](http://www.resisters.ca)**