



# Peggy Gish Reports from Iraq

Thee-mail forwarded by Nancy Hawkins

This is letter from a teammate and friend in Iraq. Peggy Gish is author of *Iraq A Journey of Hope*, it is available at [www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org) the Christian Peacemaker Team website.

January 31, 2006

Dear Family,

It's the end of another very busy day, but I finally have a bit of time on the computer to write. The generator for our building broke down several days ago, so we only have it when the grid is on, which is usually about four to six hours in a 24 hour period. We can go to an internet center down the street if we have time, but it limits what we can do. With so many other bigger problems to deal with, we get used to these kinds of irritations.

Much of our busyness recently has to do with responding to the video tape that was shown on Al Jazeera TV Saturday of our four colleagues. We have written a media statement and have responded to many media calls for interviews, and it sets up another wave of decision making that takes time and energy.

But more importantly, the video. Yes, it was a little shocking to see Jim, Tom, Harmeet, and Norman looking tired and thinner than before. But at least they were still alive and holding up. So we are thankful. We choose to think of it in a positive way. Someone who is familiar with some of the other Iraq hostages who had been released, told us that in some other cases, just before the release, the kidnappers publicly made strong threatening statements to get more publicity for their cause. So we hope that this is the case for our men. We continue to pray for their safety and release, and appreciate your continuing to keep them in your prayers.

A few days before the video release, another team member and I made a two day trip to Najaf to meet with the Muslim Peacemaker Teams (MPT) there established this fall. We met about 10 of the 15-18 people in-

involved in the group. Many of them are medical workers who showed us the clinic they worked in, a new clinic several are building with their own money, and the hospital for the whole region that had been occupied by coalition forces for a year after the invasion and has very little antiquated medical equipment or supplies. And the charge for services at these places is equivalent to between 29 to 39 cents and free for those who can't pay. We spent time discussing some of the projects they are interested in. They are ones which will bring them (Shia) into helpful or cooperative relationships with Sunni or Kurdish Iraqis or focus on detainees and their families.

While there we met with a Shia Ayatollah to let him know about MPT, and to listen to his concerns about the lack of respect western countries and international organizations have given Islamic societies and his desire for more open, respectful relationships between Muslims and Christians and other religious groups. We have been continually humbled by the openness and graciousness we have experienced among our Muslim brothers and sisters, not only in these personal contacts but in the outpouring of support in these last two months for CPT and our kidnapped men.

This trip and other work we are doing have been good for me and reminders of why we are here and what kind of work needs to be done for peace in Iraq.

I thank you all for your love, prayers and support. Even in these difficult times we have all been given the strength we need.

I love you all,

Peggy