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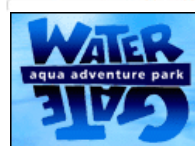
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First Published: 2011-06-20

Anti-war symbol Brian Haw dies

Peace campaigner - who won legal battle to protest outside parliament – loses fight against cancer.

Middle East Online

LONDON - Brian Haw, a British peace campaigner who sat outside the Houses of Parliament for a decade in protest at the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, has died aged 62, his family said.

The former carpenter died Saturday after a long battle with lung cancer, for which he had finally to give up his vigil on Parliament Square.

Haw became a symbol of the anti-war campaign and of civil activism with his round-the-clock protest, which began on June 2, 2001 against sanctions imposed on Iraq by his government and other Western nations.



He began protesting against the US-led sanctions imposed on Iraq

His anger grew when Britain joined the US invasion of Afghanistan later that year following the September 11 attacks, and then the war in Iraq in 2003.

Sitting in his makeshift camp on the pavement opposite Big Ben, surrounded by banners and horrific pictures of war victims, the father-of-seven was passed by lawmakers and thousands of tourists every day.

The authorities tried numerous times to get rid of him, including introducing a new law to restrict demonstrations within one kilometre (half a mile) of parliament, but they failed.

Haw's efforts were even immortalised in art -- Mark Wallinger won the 2007 Turner Prize for his exact replica of the encampment, entitled "State Britain".

"It is with deepest regret that I inform you that our father, Brian, passed away this morning," his family said in statement dated Saturday on his website.

"As you know he was battling lung cancer, and was having treatment in Germany. He left us in his sleep and in no pain, after a long, hard fight."

A separate statement from his fellow protesters said he had been "relentlessly persecuted by the authorities, which eventually took its toll on his health".

Haw said he felt compelled to leave his family to campaign for the rights of ordinary Iraqis, Afghans and Palestinians.

"I want to go back to my own kids and look them in the face again, knowing that I've done all I can to try and save the children of Iraq and other countries who are dying because of my government's unjust, amoral, fear- and money-driven policies," he once said.

Haw was beaten up several times during his protest and the British authorities repeatedly tried to remove him, but succeeded only in limiting the size of his encampment and the hours he could use a megaphone to attack government policies.

Haw had distanced himself from other protesters in Parliament Square, who were removed earlier this year for the wedding of Prince William and Catherine.

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