

Moms in Oakland protest all warfare

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By William Brand, STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND -- TWO DOZEN Oakland women -- all dressed in black -- marked Mother's Day on Saturday with a silent vigil and a call for an end to the Israeli-Palestinian war and the conflict in Iraq. Mother's Day originally was not a day for flowers and Hallmark cards, said participant Sandy Butler of Oakland. It was created by mothers who lost sons in the Civil War as a call for end to war.

The women -- members of Bay Area Women in Black -- accompanied by a drummer, walked slowly back and forth in front of the Rockridge Safeway and other stores at 51st and Broadway in Oakland.

Four of the women wore black veils and carried large black puppets.

"We thought the day before Mother's Day would be a good time for a vigil," she said. "After all, the day was started by activist mothers.

"Being a mother and having a child is an act of faith in the future," she said. Mothers have a responsibility to work to make that future bright for their children, she said.

Butler said the Oakland group is part of an international movement started in 1988 by Jewish and Palestinian women who wanted an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"We began as an Oakland Jewish group with allied members to lobby for a settlement and creation of two countries, Israel and Iraq," Butler said.

Another marcher, Rochelle Towers of Oakland, said she came because she wants to stop the senseless violence going on in Iraq.

"We are not prepared to raise our children so carefully, then send them to fight a war," Towers said.

Mothers everywhere need to stand up and say "enough," she said.

The vigil was greeted warmly by shoppers. "I had never heard about this group," one woman said. "They're really great."

The goal of Bay Area Women in Black is to register women in the Bay Area to vote. "If you're registered to vote, then get all the women on your block to register," Butler said.

