



Solidarity with the masses, not their oppressors!

U.S. imperialism, out of Afghanistan and Pakistan!

The war in Afghanistan has entered its ninth year, and it's being expanded into Pakistan through the cowardly use of drones. The Washington politicians and Pentagon generals don't see any "light at the end of the tunnel." This year Obama has already escalated the bloodletting once, and there's constant debate over whether to send still more troops to kill and die. Furthermore, even as the casualties this year reach record highs, government officials and generals openly talk of being in Afghanistan for decades to come -- perhaps 30 to 40 years according to Sir David Richards, the new head of the British Army.

While Obama directs troops in Afghanistan and Iraq and decides whether to have a new "surge" of death and destruction, he has also garnered the Nobel Peace Prize. This is reminiscent of Big Brother's slogan that "war is peace" in the novel *1984*. What's happening is that the European bourgeoisie, which controls the Peace Prize, is happy that Obama talks peace, while waging war. They didn't like Bush's unilateral imperialism, but support Obama's multilateral approach to carrying out Bush's policies.

In contrast, more and more working people in the United States and other cannon-fodder supplying NATO countries have now joined with the majority of Afghan and Pakistani peoples in wanting the U.S.-NATO troops out of Afghanistan. And why shouldn't they? There's no justice in this war.

The dirty history of the U.S. in Afghanistan

Beginning in 1979 the U.S. government heavily financed a long and dirty war in Afghanistan, not to liberate its people, but to bleed its (then) Soviet imperialist rivals for global domination. Hence, in alliance with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the CIA built an army (the Mujahideen) led by fundamentalist warlords and mass butchers that also included Saudi Arabian adventurers like millionaire Osama bin Laden. But after the Soviet troops were driven out, the U.S. had little interest in Afghanistan, and eventually left it under the rule of the ultra-fundamentalist, anti-women Taliban; and in Pakistan's sphere of influence.

During the 1990s, bin Laden turned against his former patrons and launched a campaign to drive U.S. troops out of Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich lands. But bin Laden wasn't just an isolated clerical fanatic; he had influence and

support among sections of the pan-Islamic elite, including among some members of the mostly pro-U.S. Saudi royal family. Thus, beneath the developing conflict between al-Qaeda and the U.S. imperialists lay a struggle over the interests of rival capitalist groupings in Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries, and a struggle between some of these groupings and the U.S. bourgeoisie. Part of this was a struggle over who was going to dominate Middle Eastern oil resources that had little to do with Afghanistan. Only when the Taliban gave refuge to bin Laden did U.S. imperialism renew serious interest in this impoverished country. This "interest" manifested itself with Bill Clinton's 1998 bombing, and then the post-9/11 U.S.-led invasion.

The "good war" rubbish

Obama and the ruling establishment like to portray the war in Afghanistan as a "good war," but there has never been anything good about it for the people of this poor and already decimated country.

Thousands were killed in the initial U.S.-led onslaught, and now Obama's escalation has increased the notorious bombings of civilians that went on under Bush, while his ground offensives bring new deaths in record numbers. Meanwhile, he has escalated the drone attacks into Pakistan by 30% and, according to the pro-imperialist Brookings Institute, more than 600 Pakistani civilians have been killed.

The people are now ruled over by a U.S.-installed government whose constitution is based on Sharia law, hence this year's passage of a marriage law giving husbands the legal right to rape their wives. (The law has since been revised, but Afghan women activists say the new law is hardly any better.) Moreover, it's a government filled with grisly fundamentalist warlords whose blood-stained records stretch back for decades:

One of these warlords is President Karzai's defense advisor General Abdul Rashid Dostum, whose forces in 2001 (in presence of U.S. military and intelligence personnel) murdered up to 2000 prisoners of war who had been sealed in cargo containers. Another is Karzai's first vice presidential running mate Mohammad Qasim Fahim, whose forces unleashed a 1992 reign of rape, looting and murder in Kabul that left an estimated 800 people of the Hazara minority dead.

Karzai's second vice presidential running mate is also a warlord, while his main opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, has long been a leading figure in the Northern Alliance of warlords, where he was a close advisor to the murderous Ahmed Shah Massoud.

This year's elections were marked by rampant fraud, especially by President Karzai. Hundreds of thousands of votes for Karzai were handed in from voting stations that didn't exist or were closed on election day. A number of other villages reported unanimous votes for Karzai. His totals sometimes exceeded ten times the number of people voting in this or that region.

The U.S. government and the UN worry that this fraud will create an appearance that the Afghan government is not legitimate. And without an appearance of legitimacy, there won't be any fig-leaf covering the reality of a brutal imperialist occupation of Afghanistan by U.S. and NATO troops. The U.S. and UN don't care that the entire election, even if the votes had been counted honestly, was based on allowing the people only to choose which warlord to oppress them.

Right from 2001 the people have been treated to bloody barbarism by U.S. forces. Thousands of Afghans were hauled off to Afghanistan's Bagram Air Base, Guantánamo Bay and other "black sites" around the world to be held indefinitely, tortured and even murdered. This included soldiers from the defeated Taliban conscript army, civilians who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and innocent people who were turned in for rewards. Nearly eight years later perhaps a thousand of these prisoners remain in these dungeons with no rights. And even if Obama ever closes high-profile Guantánamo Bay, he's already announced that he will resume the military commissions (kangaroo courts) at new sites. Meanwhile, Bagram remains open while U.S.-NATO soldiers continue to kick down the doors of innocent Afghans, and shoot or drag off "suspects."

Such is the "good war" in Afghanistan.

Afghan women speak out

This summer the workers and impoverished farming people of Afghanistan have already been ravaged by nearly 30 years of wars, while the U.S. and NATO, the warlord government and the Taliban only promise more. Yet there continue to be everyday acts of solidarity and resistance against all three enemies.

For example, in late 2005 the people of Farah Province elected an advocate of women's rights, secularism and democracy to parliament in a landslide. And when their representative, Malalai Joya, was expelled from parliament for denouncing most of the other politicians as the "kind who destroyed the country and killed 60,000 people" and saying that the parliament was "worse than a stable," she had wide support among the masses nationally.

Today, at age 30 and under death-threats, Joya continues to speak out. To the people of the West she says:

Dust has been thrown into the eyes of the world by your governments. You have not been told the truth. The situation now is as catastrophic as it was under the Taliban for women. Your governments have replaced the fundamentalist rule of the Taliban with another fundamentalist regime of warlords. [That is] what your soldiers are dying for.

Obama's policies are quite similar to Bush -- and in some sense he is worse than him . . . But what is important for the world is not whether the President is black or white, but his actions. You can't eat symbolism.

If the occupation forces do not leave Afghanistan voluntarily then they will face the resistance of my people . . . With the withdrawal of one enemy, the occupation forces, it will be easier to fight against these internal fundamentalist enemies.

Build the anti-war movement!

Working class and progressive people in the U.S. should come to the aid of the Afghan people by demonstrating against the continued occupation of their country. In doing this we're also strengthening the ability of the working people in this country to stand up and fight back against the Wall Street robbery, layoffs and wage-cutting, evictions and utility cutoffs, racist police brutality, deportations of immigrant sisters and brothers, and general attacks on civil liberties. An injury to one is an injury to all.

This means that we must actively build up the anti-war movement on a class basis. We must not expect that the American bourgeoisie will voluntarily give up their world empire, nor that the European bourgeoisie and the UN will come to our aid. Instead we must unite workers here and abroad. And we must unite with all those who are specially oppressed on the basis of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or immigration status, as well as building international solidarity with those who are living under the guns of U.S. imperialism abroad. []

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