

CONFRONTING OUR MISTAKES: AFGHANISTAN

Peace Action 

Real Security through
International Cooperation

Who are we fighting in Afghanistan?

We are told we are fighting the Taliban. The word Taliban means "students". It refers to groups led by graduates of fundamentalist Islamic schools. In fact we are not fighting one group in Afghanistan, but dozens of resistance groups, from different parts of the country, working in loose communication with each other. Many of these groups were allies of the U.S. in the past.

The "Taliban" are primarily groups of ethnic Pashtuns from southern Afghanistan and western Pakistan, proud that they have never been conquered. They fought off both the British and Soviet armies.

Now they are fighting another invader, the United States. Clearly, even with their harsh repressive practices, they have support from many of the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan and have been able to secure financing to continue and expand their areas of control.

Afghanistan Questions & Answers

The war in Afghanistan is not a good war. It has been a mistake from the beginning. Despite changing U.S. strategies, the war goes on and on. It is important that our national leaders advocate peace and not the unending suffering of war.

Why isn't the U.S. winning in Afghanistan?

After 6 years of war, the U.S.-backed Karzai government still has only limited control outside the capital Kabul. Corruption in the Karzai government is rampant. The rest of the country is in the hands of disparate war lords. None of the factions truly supports human rights. The Afghan people continue to be among the poorest in the world.

**THERE ARE ALREADY 60,000
COALITION TROOPS IN
AFGHANISTAN, INCLUDING
36,000 AMERICANS.**

Despite troop increases, the U.S. military position is deteriorating. Increasingly, to deal with Afghan insurgents, the U.S. military is turning to bombing. The resultant civilian casualties are turning the Afghan population sharply against us.

WHAT CAN THE U.S. DO?

The U.S. will not succeed in imposing a government on Afghanistan. We need to negotiate with all factions within Afghanistan, including the Taliban, and with the countries surrounding Afghanistan, including Iran and Pakistan, to agree upon a peace process that will allow Afghans to select their own government. **As part of that process the U.S. will need to withdraw all US military forces from Afghanistan.**

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Common Misconceptions

Don't we have to get Osama Bin Laden?

The main justification for starting the war in Afghanistan was that the Taliban government then in power was offering sanctuary to Osama Bin Laden. Going to war with an entire country is a poor way to capture a small mobile group living in a remote area. Bin Laden still has not been caught. Now U.S. ally Pakistan is reported to be providing the same kind of sanctuary. A wider war with Pakistan would be even more disastrous.

Isn't the war necessary to stop terrorism?

The Afghan war was started on a false premise. You can't fight terrorist groups through war. Terrorism isn't a movement, country or group that can be stopped by going to war. Even small disaffected groups can use terror tactics such as suicide attacks. Stopping those using terror tactics requires police methods, utilizing good intelligence and international cooperation. It also involves dealing with the grievances that feed fanaticism. The Afghan War, like the Iraq War, is creating, not stopping, terrorists.

Don't we need to stop opium production?

In 2000, when the Taliban were in power, they banned opium production, cutting production by 90%. Now after six years of war, Afghanistan is once again the number one opium producer in the world. The Taliban now benefit from opium sales. But so do war lords allied to the Karsai government. Development, not war, is the way to curtail opium production.

WHAT CAN I DO?

EDUCATE

The war will continue until enough people speak up saying that war is not the answer to the problems facing Afghanistan. Talk with your family, friends, co-workers or religious congregation members.

SPEAK OUT

Write a letter to the editor. Send letters or email messages to your Congressional representatives.

STEP UP

Join a local peace group that is working to end the war in Afghanistan. You can find a local affiliate of Peace Action working in your neighborhood by going to the Peace Action website under National Network.

SPEAK OUT!

Contact Your Congressional Representative

Call the congressional switchboard (202-224-3121) and ask to be connected to your Representative's and Senators' offices.

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Produced by Peace Action Education Fund, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1020 •
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone: (301) 565-4050 • Fax: (301) 565-0850 • www.peace-action.org