

## **CANADA IN AFGHANISTAN – CONFRONTING THE LIES**

The Canadian public is being misled about the realities of Canada's "military mission" in Afghanistan. In an effort to drum up support for this war, the Harper government and its corporate media cronies routinely spread lies and disinformation about the war and its effects on the Afghan people. All Canadians must hold their government accountable for misinforming them about the real effects of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, and for sending our soldiers to fight and die in an unjust and unwinnable neo-colonial war. *Any government which governs by lies will finally be defeated by the truth.*

## **THE US/NATO MILITARY MISSION IS SUPPORTED BY THE AFGHAN PEOPLE**

This is the biggest lie of all. The evidence provided by independent polls shows rapidly declining support among most Afghans for the presence of NATO forces and growing support for negotiations with the insurgency to end hostilities. The 2006 ABC News/BBC World Service Poll showed that unconditional support for foreign troops dropped from 65% approval in 2005 to 55% in 2006. The Asia Foundation survey (2006) showed that optimism about the future of Afghanistan had dropped from 64% (2004) to 44% (2006). All independent surveys have shown declining levels of support for foreign troops, and a growing support for peace talks with the Taliban. Only the recently released CBC-EnviroNics Poll, which has been designed as a government propaganda tool with its loaded questions and questionable methodology, appears to contradict these results. In May of 2007, the Afghan Senate called for a date to be set for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan, and for a cease-fire and peace talks with the Taliban.

## **US/NATO COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS HAVE BROUGHT GREATER PEACE AND SECURITY TO AFGHANISTAN**

According to the UN, there has been a 30% rise in violence in Afghanistan during 2007. There has also been a huge increase in civilian casualties in the past year, leading to Over 200 civilians were killed in June 2007 by US air strikes and NATO ground operations. More civilians are killed by US/NATO forces than by the Taliban according to the UN (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – IRIN – July, 2007).

## **CANADA IS UPHOLDING INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS**

Since General Rick Hillier signed the Canada-Afghan Detainee Agreement in December 2005, the Canadian military has continued to transfer battlefield prisoners to the Afghan authorities where many have been tortured and others "rendered" to US authorities. The previous Minister of Defence, Gordon O'Connor, misled the Canadian House of Commons on this issue. Since the Afghan government reinstated capital punishment in October, 2007, many detainees transferred from Canadian custody may also now be executed. Canada is not only violating the 3<sup>rd</sup> Geneva Convention, it is also violating of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Section 7).

## **CANADA HAS EARNED THE RESPECT OF ITS NATO PARTNERS**

The Harper government is sacrificing the lives of Canadian soldiers under the hoax of national prestige and greater international "influence". However, the reality is that Canada has simply become a junior partner in the US war machine. Harper echoed US approval of Israeli military aggression against Lebanon in 2006, and has helped the Bush administration to sabotage the democratic Palestinian Legislative elections in 2006. He supported sending Canadian troops to Iraq in 2003. Through the Security and Prosperity Partnership, the Harper government is putting the Canadian people, resources and economy at the disposal of Bush and company and to create a "Fortress America" as a base to launch aggression and war. Far from winning respect, this policy violates the aspirations of the vast majority of the people of the world. Canada's continued presence in the aggressive military alliance NATO can only further sully Canada's reputation in the world.

## **CANADA IS PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN AND RECONSTRUCTION AID**

Although the Harper government pretends that the Afghanistan mission is also a humanitarian mission, the facts tell a different story. According to Action Aid International (2006), only 14% of US aid to Afghanistan was used for economic assistance and reconstruction. According to the Senlis Council (2006) only 10% of Canada's aid was non-military. According to NGO Action Aid (2005), 60% of all Canada's development aid was defined as "phantom aid". This means that most of the aid is only provided for the purchase of Canadian products ("tied aid") - a policy which takes food four to five months longer to arrive

in Afghanistan and drives down prices for local farmers' produce. Also, much of the remaining aid was skimmed off by corrupt officials in the Afghan government. The so-called 3-D approach (defence/development/diplomacy) is a sham. The primary purpose of all Western aid to Afghanistan is to fund the US/NATO war against the Afghan resistance.

#### **CANADA IS HELPING THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN**

Contrary to all the government propaganda, the facts on the ground in Afghanistan show that the US/NATO war against the Afghan resistance has brought untold hardship and misery to a population that had already been ravaged by the war against the Soviet Armed Forces. The UN World Food Program (2006) estimated that over 6 million people were at risk of famine and starvation, even though the UN had only received 33% of required food aid. Canadian troops are helping to enforce US counter-narcotics programs. The eradication of the poppy crop is contributing to rural poverty. The US is also pressing the reluctant Afghan government to begin a toxic spraying program while, at the same time, refusing to license poppy cultivation for medical purposes, as many European nations have suggested.

#### **THE HARPER GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN OPEN AND HONEST ABOUT THE WAR**

Unfortunately, ministers and senior officials in the Harper government have continued to mislead the Canadian public - either through the suppression of information on the spurious grounds of "*national security*", or through outright lies. When *The Toronto Globe and Mail* requested information regarding human rights abuses in Afghanistan (under a freedom of information request), the document released by the government was heavily censored. The blacked out sections referred to the high rate of extra-judicial executions, torture and illegal detentions of battlefield prisoners. Later, General Rick Hillier justified this censorship by declaring that any information on the treatment of detainees captured by Canadian troops would be suppressed because it was "*an operational security issue*". The government wants to keep us in the dark in order to hide the war crimes that have been committed in the name of all Canadians in Afghanistan.

#### **END THE LIES - BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

- Canada needs to end its complicity in the US drive for domination in Central Asia and the Middle East.
- Canada needs to immediately withdraw Canadian Armed Forces from Afghanistan.
- Canada needs to withdraw from aggressive military alliances such as the US-led NATO.
- Canada needs to uphold international laws, treaties and conventions.
- Canada needs to respect the right of all peoples to resist foreign occupation
- Canada needs to uphold the right of self-determination for all nations
- Canada needs to return to the tradition of overseas peace-keeping rather than war-mongering.
- Canada needs a made-in-Canada foreign policy.
- Canada needs an anti-war government.
- CANADIANS NEED TO SUPPORT THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

**NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION – SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27<sup>TH</sup>  
RALLY AT 1:00 P.M., CORBETT HALL (112 St. & Whyte Ave.)  
March to the Arts Barns (10330-84 Ave.) for Speakers and Music.  
Organized by the Edmonton Coalition Against War & Racism. For more  
information, visit [ecawar.org](http://ecawar.org)**