

Afghanistan: WITHDRAW THE TROOPS NOW!

Fund jobs and services, not war and weapons

THE NATO onslaught on Afghanistan is now in its tenth year. Ten years of horrific brutality inflicted on those who have fought against the invasion and on many thousands of civilians in the areas under attack.

Judy Beishon

Last month the Times quoted a western official as chillingly boasting: "Even should the Taliban suddenly make loud noises like 'we've had enough', the US would say 'we haven't given you enough yet'. They're getting hit by technology they've never seen before."

Yet, far from defeating the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida with this massive fire power, British foreign secretary William Hague recently warned that British troops face increased levels of violence. In 2010 so far there has been a record number of Nato troop deaths in Afghanistan; this loss of life is set to continue for as long as the imperialist-driven bloodbath goes on.

Hague justifies another four years of British military intervention by saying that Nato is helping to liberate the people of Afghanistan, "and with the important goal of maintaining our own security".

Peventing terrorism?

THE IDEA that the war will prevent global terrorism is repeatedly being exposed as fanciful. Even the new head of Britain's armed forces, General Richards, admitted last week that Al-Qa'ida cannot be defeated by military power.

In any case, most of Nato's might is aimed at the Taliban militias, that

one British officer has described as "very local to their communities ... 75% or so, maybe even higher, are fighting on the basis of a local sense of grievance, injustice, alienation". Recognising the blind alley of their war, the current strategy of the US-led coalition involves, on the one hand, trying to entice the Taliban rank-and-file to give up fighting with promises of jobs and cash, while on the other carrying out brutal night-time bombardments against them.

Liberation?

HELPING TO liberate the Afghan people? Much as most Afghan people do not want to live under another reactionary Taliban regime, neither do they want the so-called 'liberation' by Nato that is destroying lives, security and infrastructure. Nor do they support the weak and corrupt US-enforced government of Hamid Karzai that cannot kick Nato out or end the widespread poverty and lack of basic services.

The billions of dollars and pounds being spent on this war are not benefiting ordinary people, whether they are in Afghanistan, the US, Britain or elsewhere. The troops should be brought home immediately and the money spent on jobs and services rather than destruction.

As well as building anti-war movements in Britain and the US that can secure the withdrawal of the troops, workers' organisations internationally can offer help in the form that the Afghan working people and poor really need. That would be workers' solidarity and support to help the Afghan people fully liberate themselves, through organising democratically against the corrupt, self-enriching Afghan elites.



Demonstrate against the war

Saturday 20 November, assemble 12noon, Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, London. Called by the Stop the War Coalition

140 civilians were killed in the US air strike of Granai village in 2009.

photo Guy Smallman

- **Withdraw the troops now! Spend the money on jobs and public services, not war and weapons.**
- **For workers' solidarity internationally to support the Afghan working people in**

- building their own organisations and deciding their own future.**
- **For a socialist alternative to capitalism in Britain, Afghanistan and worldwide, to end poverty, terror and war permanently.**

whatwestandfor

The Socialist Party fights for socialist change – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also fight, in our day-to-day campaigning, for every possible improvement for working-class people.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a democratic, socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Work & Income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retire-

ment pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstatement the link with average earnings now.

- Reject 'Welfare to Work'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Public services

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly-owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

New workers' party

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party!

Socialism and Internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!