

Ten Reasons to Bring Canada's Troops Home From Afghanistan

Sept. 25, 2010: To date, 152 Canadian Forces personnel have been killed in the war since 2002. The Government of Canada and NATO argue that we must stay in Afghanistan to build democracy, support women's rights and stop terrorists. The facts show otherwise. Now our government is talking about remaining in Afghanistan after 2011. Here are a few of many reasons foreign troops should leave Afghanistan.

1. NATO is not bringing peace to Afghanistan. The United Nations announced August 10th that the rate of civilian casualties in Afghanistan is reaching an all-time high. The number of innocent people injured or killed during the past six months increased by 31 percent compared to the first half of 2009, according to the UN report. The rate of children killed in war is up 55 percent, with more than 565 killed or injured this year. The UN previously reported that 2009 was the deadliest year for civilians since the 2001 invasion, but 2010 has been bloodier, with more than 3,268 killed or injured so far.

2. Women's rights have not improved for most women in the country. Honour killings and attacks on women continue to rise. The newly passed family law allows husbands to refuse food to their wives if they refuse sex and forces women to ask permission to leave the house or find employment. As Afghan MP Malalai Joya says: The government of Afghanistan is a "photocopy" of the Taliban when it comes to women's rights.

3. The war is not winnable. Every attempt to occupy Afghanistan has ended in a humiliating defeat for foreign forces. According to *The New Statesman*: "The Taliban already control more than 70 per cent of the country, where they collect taxes, enforce the sharia and dispense their usual rough justice. Every month, their sphere of influence increases. According to a recent Pentagon report, Karzai's government has control of only 29 out of 121 key strategic districts."

4. The war doesn't make us safer from terrorist attack. On the contrary, Canada is now seen as part of a hostile coalition; every day we stay in Afghanistan the chances of attacks at home increase.

5. The government of Afghanistan is corrupt and dominated by warlords. Election rigging is common.

6. Western policy towards Afghanistan has always been influenced by the need to secure energy corridors – that is pipeline routes from the massive gas

fields of the Caspian region through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. One of the first things Hamid Karzai did after being appointed was to renew the plans to build a pipeline through the country.

7. There is little reconstruction in Afghanistan. The Government of Canada currently employs four times as many people to do public relations work than to do reconstruction. Many areas of the country are still destroyed 8 years after the war started. NATO drops more than 100 tons of bombs a month (that doesn't include missile strikes) which destroy houses and infrastructure as well as lives.

8. Opium production, which was largely eradicated in 2001, is now the chief business in the country. The government ministries in charge of halting opium production are run by some of the country's biggest drug lords such as General Mohammed Daoud. Hamid Karzai's brother Walid is a well known opium trafficker.

9. The war has already cost Canadian taxpayers \$18 billion and the Canadian government has decided it will not make public the future costs of the war. The war is also being used to justify huge increases in military spending. The Canada First Defence Strategy, the military policy paper of the Harper government, proposes spending \$490 billion on the military over the next 20 years - that's more than \$16,000 per person.

10. The war is spreading and could engulf the entire region. Attacks by the US continue across the border in Pakistan, bringing open war to a nuclear armed nation of 170 million people. All of the initial justifications for the war are being proven false. The Afghan people continue to live with poverty and violence and the war is worsening with each new NATO deployment.

How many more people will be killed before Canada and the other NATO countries leave?

It's time to bring the troops home.

Adapted from: Top Ten Reasons to Bring the Troops Home From Afghanistan Now (Canadian Peace Alliance (<http://www.acp-cpa.ca/en/Factsheet2.pdf>))