



Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

United States Section

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Statement on U.S. Involvement in Afghanistan and Pakistan

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Nobel Peace Prize 1931

FIRST INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY

Emily Greene Balch
Nobel Peace Prize 1946

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The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, U.S. Section, **opposes military action to resolve the armed conflict in Afghanistan.** Specifically, we cannot support the sending of 30,000 additional U.S. troops into the country and the use of drone aircraft there and in Pakistan. **We call for the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO military forces.**

It should be self evident that the use of violent force by another country cannot lead to the elimination of violence and armed conflict within Afghanistan. The very people the U.S. claims must be protected from Taliban insurgents are actually endangered by the presence of U.S and NATO troops. According to figures provided by the United Nations, at least 2100 Afghan civilians died in conflict related deaths in 2008. Of these, at least 1000 were killed by Taliban or other insurgents, who often target communities where U.S. military forces have had a presence. At least 800 civilians were killed in 2008 by Afghan government forces or by occupying U.S. and NATO forces, and of these at least 445 were killed by air strikes. Afghan women's organizations, such as the Revolutionary Association of Afghan Women, and women's organizations involved in in-country initiatives, such as Madre and the Global Fund for Women, have consistently stated that the occupying U.S. military presence increases the level of violence in Afghan communities resulting in more civilian deaths and abductions and more dangerous conditions for women seeking to participate in public life, peace building, and civilian governance.

The Taliban, whether in Afghanistan or Pakistan, is not a direct military threat to the United States. However, U.S. military activity in both countries continues to alienate residents and encourages more men to join the Taliban.

The stated goals of the U.S. invasion and military occupation of Afghanistan were (1) "building democracy" in Afghanistan and (2) relieving the suffering and oppression of women. Seven years later, the government is widely acknowledged to be inept and corruption is rampant. Seven years later, conditions facing Afghan women are deplorable and the human rights of all people, but especially women, are flagrantly violated. There is official apathy toward, and at times, blatant sanctioning of violence against women. NATO forces in Afghanistan have not adopted gender sensitive practices and neither U.S. nor NATO forces are implementing the standards outlined in Security Council Resolution 1325 for protecting women and ensuring their full participation in civil society and post conflict reconstruction.

In view of these factors, we urge the U.S. government to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan and support the economic and physical rebuilding of Afghanistan by the Afghan people, with full participation of women in both the public and private

sectors. Funding must go to the Afghan people to support their efforts to rebuild infrastructure, society, and their economy. It must not be given to U.S. based contractors.

We support the following:

- ✓ We ask the Secretary General of the United Nations to convene a meeting for the purpose of creating a stable government that is accountable to the people of Afghanistan, can protect their basic human rights and provide for their basic human needs. Participants at this meeting should include leaders from the Afghan national government, representatives of each province, representative from local Afghan civic and tribal groups, and leaders from countries adjoining Afghanistan.
- ✓ Resources for the rebuilding of the country, which has been destroyed by years of war, should be provided by the U.S. and all the other countries which have participated in destruction of Afghanistan, in particular Russia and Great Britain. According to the National Priorities Project, the U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan are costing approximately two billion dollars per month; this money should be redirected for the purposes of rebuilding and developing Afghanistan.
- ✓ Binding assurances that funded projects address the needs and requests of Afghans and are not self serving projects of foreign donors.
- ✓ Investment in long term aid should be directed toward increasing self-reliance, such as sustainable agriculture efforts, as practiced traditionally by farmers in Afghanistan.
- ✓ Women must be involved in all the above processes as legally mandated by UNSCR 1325

WILPF urges the U.S. Congress and all respective government departments to rescind their policy on continuing and escalating a dangerous war and occupation in Afghanistan, which now is including military actions in Pakistan. We must cease this endless killing of people on all sides.