

Workers Solidarity Alliance Statement on the 2009 US-Afghan Escalation

Workers Solidarity Alliance

January 5, 2010

On December 1, 2009, President Barack Obama announced that he will send tens of thousands of additional troops to Afghanistan, escalating the war in central Asia. Obama claims to want peace while he orders more war and death for poor and working people. He claims that the US fights for freedom and democracy, but he allies himself with tyrannical Afghani warlords. He does this with the backing of both Democrats and Republicans and the corporate interests they serve. None of this is new or unusual for the United States Government and its NATO allies. The only thing “new” is the person issuing the orders today: Obama, the “Candidate of Hope” was elected promising “Change.” Now in office, he delivers more of the same — using the US military to install pro-capitalist governments in countries around the world in order to maintain and expand access to raw materials, cheap labor and consumer markets for Western corporations.

Obama and his cohorts have lured many sincere working people into supporting the war in Afghanistan by promises that it will curb terrorist attacks against the US and bring freedom, democracy and women’s rights to Afghanistan. The real facts in Afghanistan show such “humanitarian” concerns to be nothing but lies:

- US/NATO aerial bombardments relentlessly murder thousands of Afghan civilians in their homes, villages and cities; in fact, air bombings in Afghanistan have significantly escalated under President Obama
- US/NATO forces have allied since day one, and remain allied, with the “Northern Alliance” warlords responsible for mass atrocities against civilians in 1992 and who now dominate the corrupt regime in Kabul, through which they secure immunity for their past and present crimes
- Afghani women activists — to whose cause the occupiers pay lip service — have consistently denounced the US-led occupation and puppet regime, demanding that foreign troops leave and calling for prosecution of both Taliban and pro-US war criminals

The escalation of the war is a disaster for the oppressed poor and working people of Afghanistan. As such, the “surge” will inevitably fuel more terrorist attacks against civilians in

the US and elsewhere, attacks which elites will then use to justify the far bloodier terrorism of “Western” military powers against cities and villages in the Middle East. US elites will then seek to manipulate workers’ fear of terrorist attacks into support for the so-called “War on Terror;” increased defense spending and decreased funding of education, welfare, healthcare and social services, increased militarization of the domestic police, and increased spying and repression of workers organizations and anti-capitalist political organizations in the United States. All in the guise of “fighting terrorism.”

It is our stance that authentic peace and security can only be achieved through worldwide working-class solidarity against all forms of oppression. The Workers Solidarity Alliance firmly stands with the oppressed people of Afghanistan and with progressive organizations such as the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) and others, who we know are risking their lives at this moment to defy imperialists, warlords and fundamentalists alike. The WSA unequivocally supports the aspirations of all oppressed Afghans for a free, democratic and peaceful life.

There can be no hope for liberation of Afghanistan by foreign occupiers — only the struggle of oppressed Afghans and authentic solidarity from struggling people around the world offers any such hope. American workers who wish to stand up for oppressed Afghans should stand against the war-mongering of “our” government.

It is heartening to see the anti-war movement stirring in the US and internationally against the troop surge in Afghanistan. However, the movement as it stands now suffers grave limitations. It is telling that many liberals and Democrats who have spoken out against the war in Iraq are willing to compromise with the Afghan war. This fact alone speaks to the dire lack of coherent social principles in the broadly defined anti-war movement. Many who criticize it do so (as with Iraq) out of “strategic” or “pragmatic” reasons — that the war is a “mistake” or “cannot be won.” Such reasoning is not anti-war. These reasons imply that the war would be just fine if the US could achieve its aims.

That is but a flip-side argument to those now clamoring for “victory.” On the other hand, in our experience, many in the protest movement seem more concerned to prove their moral righteousness, while neglecting to build an anti-war movement that can actually defeat wars. We find both the “pragmatic” and “moral” arguments against the war unsatisfactory.

The WSA proposes a different orientation for the anti-war movement. As an organization of working-class militants rooted in the traditions of anarcho-syndicalism, libertarian socialism and class struggle, we are convinced that militarism can only be defeated by the rank and file of working people, in common struggle against the class of bureaucrats, politicians and capitalists who profit from the slaughter of war. Only through a mass struggle against all bosses and the overthrow of capitalism and its supporting political structure will war and imperialism ever be definitively ended. While we firmly support anti-war protesters, we know full well that news-grabbing marches by a small crew of professional activists are no substitute for the kind of mass working-class resistance that wreaked havoc on the US war effort in Vietnam: rank-and-file refusal, sabotage and mutiny, social upheaval in the ghettos and working-class communities from which the soldiers are recruited, and so on.

Here we find the Achilles heel of US imperialism. The US military is an army made up of recruits largely from working-class backgrounds. With rampant unemployment and underemployment in precarious service industry jobs, many workers increasingly see military service as their only viable career option. Many immigrants join the US military in exchange for US citizen-

ship, interpreted as a path to a decent job and a better life. Frontline GIs are enlisted largely from working-class neighborhoods, towns and ghettos suffering economic hardship. The rank and file of the US military do not simply enlist because of blind patriotic loyalty to the ruling elite. They often enlist out of the economic hardship inherent for working-class people forced to live under an economic system in which basic necessities such as shelter and health care are treated as luxuries for those who can pay rather than necessities that all people are in need of and have a right to, in a word — capitalism. Already we have seen the first stirrings of resistance in the military's rank and file, from soldiers who have refused to serve in Iraq. We deeply respect the courage of those soldiers and technicians who have taken a stand against the madness of war, asserting the value of working-class lives. Their brave example serves as the clearest manifestation of the fact that US soldiers do not fight simply out of ideological faith in the objectives of US imperialism.

The anti-war movement, if it is to have a chance at success, must encourage the growing resistance in the lower ranks of capitalism's armed forces. The rank-and-file soldiers of capitalist empire, recruited from the working class, could turn against the brass to become a true workers' army dedicated to fighting the real enemy at home: the ruling class of capitalists, politicians and the middle managers who do their bidding.

We pledge our support for rank-and-file soldiers who refuse the orders of their commanders. We extend our support in particular to the Iraq Veterans Against the War, an organized grouping of veterans and active-duty soldiers that seeks to undermine support for imperialist war in Iraq and Afghanistan from within the US military. We also encourage efforts to establish solidarity across battle lines with the rank-and-file of state militaries around the world.

While supporting anti-militarist resistance within the armed forces of the US, NATO, and other imperialist states, we also acknowledge the right of oppressed Afghans to resist all forms of aggression and despotism at home, whether it be in the form of foreign imperialism or homegrown autocracy. Thus the Workers Solidarity Alliance extends its solidarity to all who struggle to build a truly democratic Afghanistan that respects the humanistic aspirations and needs of all working-class Afghans, male and female alike. We affirm again our internationalist, anti-authoritarian principles and our solidarity with oppressed and struggling people everywhere.

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