

# Afghanistan Questions and Answers

The war in Afghanistan is not a good war. It has been a mistake from the beginning. The U.S. is clearly once again in the middle of a civil war. Despite changing U.S. war strategies, the war goes on and on. It is important that our national leaders advocate peace and not the unending suffering of war.

## Don't we have to get Osama Bin Laden?

The main justification for starting the war in Afghanistan was that the Taliban government then in power was offering sanctuary to Osama Bin Laden. Going to war with an entire country is a poor way to capture a small mobile group living in a remote area. Bin Laden still has not been caught.

## Isn't the war necessary to stop terrorism?

The Afghan war was started on a false premise. You can't fight terrorist groups through war. Terrorism isn't a movement, country or group that can be stopped by going to war. Even small disaffected groups can use terror tactics such as suicide attacks. Stopping those using terror tactics requires police methods, utilizing good intelligence and international cooperation. It also involves dealing with the grievances that feed fanaticism. The Afghan War, like the Iraq War, is creating, not stopping, terrorists.

## Why isn't the U.S. winning in Afghanistan?

After ten years of war, the U.S.-backed Karzai government still has only limited control outside the capital Kabul. Corruption in the Karzai government is rampant. The rest of the country is in the hands of disparate war lords. None of the factions truly supports human rights. The Afghan people continue to be among the poorest in the world. Women continue to be oppressed.



Afghanistan

Despite nearly 100,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, the U.S. military position is deteriorating. Increasingly, to deal with Afghan insurgents, the U.S. military is turning to bombing. The resultant civilian casualties are turning the Afghan population sharply against us.

## Who are we fighting in Afghanistan?

We are told we are fighting the Taliban. But actually all the word Taliban means is "students". It refers to groups led by graduates of fundamentalist Islamic schools. In fact we are not fighting one group in Afghanistan, but dozens of resistance groups, from different parts of the country, working in loose

communication with each other. Many of these groups were allies of the US in the past.

The “Taliban” are primarily groups of ethnic Pashtuns from southern Afghanistan and western Pakistan, proud that they have never been conquered. They fought off both the British and Soviet armies.



Now they are fighting another invader, the United States. Clearly, even with their harsh repressive practices, they have support from many of the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan and have been able to secure financing to continue and expand their areas of control.

### **What is the connection to Pakistan?**

The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is a creation of the British. Pashtun families and their relatives live on both sides of the border. Because warlords based in Pakistan are fighting with and supporting Taliban in Afghanistan, the U.S. pushed the Pakistan government into a disastrous widened war, driving millions from their homes.

### **Don't we need to stop opium production?**

In 2000, when the Taliban were in power, they banned opium production, cutting production by 90%. Now after eight years of war, Afghanistan is once again the number one opium producer in the world. The Taliban now benefit from opium sales. But so do war lords allied to the Karsai government. Development, not war, is the way to curtail opium production.

### **What can the U.S. do?**

The U.S. will not succeed in imposing a government on Afghanistan. We need to negotiate with all factions within Afghanistan, including the Taliban, and with the countries surrounding Afghanistan, including Iran and Pakistan, to agree upon a peace process that will allow Afghans to select their own government. As part of that process the U.S. will need to withdraw all US military forces from Afghanistan.

### **What can I do?**

The war will continue until enough people speak up saying that war is not the answer to the problems facing Afghanistan. Talk with your family, friends, co-workers or religious congregation members.

Write a letter to the editor. Send letters or email messages to your Congressional representatives. Addresses can be found on the Peace Action website, [www.peaceact.net](http://www.peaceact.net).

Join a local peace group that is working to end the war in Afghanistan. In the Capital District you can find a group in your area by contacting Peace Action.

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