

Malalai Joya tour marks longest U.S. war

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BY JEFF MACKLER, [Socialist Action](#) , Oct 29, 2013



Noam Chomsky and Malalai Joya in Boston. By Rachel Williams.

Afghan women's rights and antiwar fighter Malalai Joya toured the U.S. for three weeks in October on behalf of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) and the Los Angeles-based Afghan Women's Mission. Joya's national tour included 10 cities: New York, Boston, Amherst, Albany, Chicago, Madison, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego.

The tour focused on mobilizing opposition to the continuing U.S. war and occupation in Afghanistan, now in its 13th year—the longest war in U.S. history—and on the plight of Afghan women.

Joya, who survived seven assassination attempts during her near underground work in Afghanistan, explained to packed audiences that the U.S. government has no intention of leaving her country, regardless of the news media reports of "agreements" that the occupation is slated to end in 2014. Nine permanent U.S. military bases attest to U.S. intentions to maintain a strong military and geo-political presence in this critical Central Asian region and to be first in line to exploit Afghanistan's estimated \$3 trillion in copper and rare earth metals. Afghanistan's reserves of these critical elements are among the largest in the world.

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Joya insisted that the Afghan people faced three lethal opponents: the U.S. occupation forces, the corrupt “mafia and puppet” Hamid Karzai warlord “government,” and the fundamentalist Taliban, whose misogynist practices result in the degradation of women to a degree virtually unmatched in the world today. Afghanistan, Joya points out, is rated as the second most corrupt nation on earth and in the top 10 of the poorest nations as well.

She pointed out in detail that criminal elements in the Karzai government included the nation’s leading drug lords (opium dealers), acting in collusion with the CIA, as well as fundamentalist warlords who differed little from the misogynist forces of the Taliban Islamic fundamentalists. She pointed out in detail that criminal elements in the Karzai government included the nation’s leading drug lords (opium dealers), acting in collusion with the CIA, as well as fundamentalist warlords who differed little from the misogynist forces of the Taliban Islamic fundamentalists.

U.S. public statements labeling the Taliban as terrorist, for the public record, according to Joya, are contradicted by U.S. efforts to negotiate the imposition of a new government including the Taliban’s elite capitalist warlords.

At 35, Joya has experienced war and intervention in her country for her lifetime, beginning with the 1979 invasion of the Soviet Union, when her family was driven into refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan where she was raised as a child under extremely difficult conditions and as a teenager became a teacher of women in underground schools supported by unregistered and essentially “illegal” NGO’s. These are recounted in detail in her heartwarming 2009 book, “A Woman Among Warlords: The Extraordinary Story of an Afghan Who Dared to Raise Her Voice.” Hundreds of copies were sold in the course of the UNAC/AWM tour.

Malalai Joya’s secular father lost a leg after stepping on a land mine at the time of the Soviet war, when tens of thousands of Afghans were brutally murdered by the would-be Russian conquerors. Following the Soviet withdrawal, Joya’s family was again driven to seek refuge in Pakistan as a civil war erupted among opposing warlords for control of the nation’s resources.

This was followed by the post-9/11 U.S. invasion and war, accompanied by a still-unending war against the Afghan people including the deployment of the largest privatized, mercenary army in U.S. history. Death-squad private teams accompanied by bombings are the norm in Afghanistan today.

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Joya described the almost unbelievable oppression, murder, rape and torture of women who do not comply with fundamentalist standards that relegate woman to near sub-human status. Along with that brutal mistreatment, pervasive poverty and the lack of adequate medical treatment make Afghanistan the worst place in the world for women, according to international surveys. The dreadful conditions have led to a rise in self-immolation by desperate women.

Joya emphasized that all three Afghan oppressors—the U.S., the Taliban, and the Karzai government—collaborate to reduce or eliminate public education, especially for women. Public schools are increasingly privatized; young women who attend any schools are frequently murdered, and schools in general are subjected to terror attacks or bombings by all the forces of reaction.

And as if war, poverty, and repression were not enough, Joya cited reports that Afghanistan produces 90% of the world's opiate drugs and that over 1 million Afghans are addicted, the world's top per capita users. Many of those addicted are women and children, while treatment facilities are woefully inadequate.

Joya concluded that after 12 years of U.S./NATO occupation, rather than conditions improving for Afghans, particularly women and children, they are deteriorating in all areas, except for the gains in power and wealth by the U.S.-backed thieves and war criminals.

“In my country,” she asserted, “It takes time, but the resistance of ordinary Afghans—students of the universities, democratic-minded intellectuals, and some political parties—is rising against the occupiers. More and more people are standing up against the U.S. and NATO, and their lackeys, puppets, the warlords, and the Taliban.”

“Afghans have a proud history of fighting against all occupations,” Joya repeatedly noted. “People are tired, wounded, and hate all kinds of these terrorists. But they will stand up one day more and more against them.” She pointed to the hopeful demonstrations of “hundreds of thousands” of Afghans against the U.S./NATO occupation, the Taliban, and the Karzai government that have been initiated by the Solidarity Party of Afghanistan and several other resistance groups.

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The UNAC/Afghan Women's Mission tour included some 65 successful meetings and raised an estimated \$25,000 to pay for travel expenses and to benefit the fight for women's rights in Afghanistan. Thousands of people heard Malalai directly, and tens of thousands heard her through extensive media coverage, including interviews on "Democracy Now."

Highlights of the tour included a Boston meeting with Noam Chomsky; a New York City meeting initiated by Eve Ensler, playwright/author of "The Vagina Monologues"; and a standing-room-only meeting of 325 at the Berkeley City College auditorium.

UNAC's decision to organize a national speaking tour for Malalai Joya to call attention to the continuing U.S. war in Afghanistan—consistent with UNAC's opposition to all U.S. wars and interventions—represented an important additional effort in establishing it as the broadest and most active national antiwar coalition in the U.S. today. Hundreds of antiwar and social justice activists and organizations around the country joined forces to make the tour a success and win new forces for the ongoing struggle against imperialist war and for women's equality everywhere.