

Written by Amy Goodman
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Ahead of next week's 12th anniversary of what has become the longest war in U.S. history, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel says the United States is seeking to sign an accord to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan for the indefinite future. The United States plans to pull out the bulk of its 57,000 troops in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, but the Pentagon wants to retain a smaller force of around 10,000 forces after 2014. We are joined by Afghan activist and former member of Parliament, Malalai Joya, author of the book, "A Woman Among Warlords: The Extraordinary Story of an Afghan Who Dared to Raise Her Voice." A survivor of numerous attempts on her life, Time magazine has named her as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. "We need the support of justice-loving people of the U.S. to join their hands with us," Joya says. "Unfortunately, we see that today imperialism and fundamentalism have joined hands."

transcript

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AMY GOODMAN: We turn now to Afghanistan. Next week marks the 12th anniversary of the beginning of what's become the longest war in U.S. history. Earlier this week, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the United States is seeking to sign an accord with the Afghan government to keep U.S. troops in the country for the indefinite future. The United States plans to pull out the bulk of its 57,000 troops in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, but the Pentagon wants to retain a smaller force of around 10,000 forces after 2014. In addition, the United States wants to maintain the right to run unilateral counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan after 2014.

To discuss the situation in Afghanistan, we're joined by the activist and former Afghan member of Parliament, Malalai Joya. In 2010, *Time* magazine named her one of the 100 most influential people in the world. She is author of the book *A Woman Among Warlords: The Extraordinary Story of an Afghan Who Dared to Raise Her Voice*.

She will be joining us in a minute, but first let's go to the film *Enemies of Happiness*. The film begins in December of 2003 in a meeting of Afghanistan's newly elected Constitutional Assembly, the Loya Jirga. A then-unknown 24-year-old Malalai Joya steps to the microphone to

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deliver a speech that would make headlines around the world and draw threats against her life.

CHAIRMAN: [translated] What are you saying?

MALALAI JOYA: [translated] We kids can't get a word in. I would like to say a few words, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN: [translated] Wait a minute. Stay in your seats. One sister says that she has traveled far. She insists that we haven't given the kids enough speaking time. You have three minutes, please.

MALALAI JOYA: [translated] My name is Malalai Joya from the Farah province. With the permission of all those present and in respect of the martyrs who were killed, I would like to speak. I wish to criticize my compatriots in this room. Why would you allow criminals to be present at this Loya Jirga, warlords responsible for our country's situation? Afghanistan is the center for national and international conflicts. They oppress women and have ruined our country. They should be prosecuted. They might be forgiven by the Afghan people, but not by history.

CHAIRMAN: [translated] Sit down! Sit down! The sister has crossed the line of what is considered common courtesy. She is banished from this assembly and cannot return. Send her out! Guards, throw her out! She doesn't deserve to be here.

AMY GOODMAN: That was Malalai Joya challenging the leaders of the Loya Jirga, a former member of Parliament. That was December 2003. Malalai joins us in studio now. What happened after that, Malalai Joya?

MALALAI JOYA: Yeah, I said the truth and exposed the mask of fundamentalist warlords, who are mentally same like Taliban but only physically has been changed and imposed on Afghan people. They were control Afghanistan. Still they are in power. And as I exposed their mask, they could not tolerate it and expelled me from the Loya Jirga and even not allow me to come back. They have told me if I say apologize, I can come back. As I never said apologize and will

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say apologize, and they must say apologize to suffer oppressed people of Afghanistan, especially unfortunate women, that committed many crimes against them and still continue to their crimes and fascism under the name of women rights, human rights and democracy.

AMY GOODMAN: So, explain, as we move into the 12th anniversary of the war in Afghanistan, what has happened to your country. First of all, what are you doing there today? You're no longer a member of Parliament.

MALALAI JOYA: Yeah, I am there underground, activist, and have close contact with my people.

AMY GOODMAN: What do you mean, "underground"?

MALALAI JOYA: Underground, I mean despite wearing burqa and have bodyguards, not safe moving from one place to another place, that to not be easy target. As last year on 10 of March, these terrorists attacked my house and office in Farah province, that 12 of my bodyguards brutally has been injured. And this is about seven assassination attempts they do against me. That's why I have to be underground. I mean that I can't have office or a house, that [inaudible] much easier for an activist to have it. But unfortunately, for security reasons, it's not only me, there is many other democrat men and women activists that are risking their life, struggling, but have to be underground.

And regarding your question about consequences of the 12 years of occupation of U.S. and NATO, unfortunately, was more bloodshed, crimes, women rights, human rights violations, looting of our resource and changing of our country into mafia state, as during these 12 bloody years tens of thousands of innocent civilians have been killed by occupation forces and terrorist groups. And they have changed Afghanistan to the center of the drugs. That's more than 90 percent of opium produced from Afghanistan, as I believe opium is even more dangerous than al-Qaeda and war as it destroy and spoils the life of Afghans. Around two million Afghan addicted, most of them are women and children. And also, there's a report Afghanistan is the second most corrupt country in the world. And according to UNIFEM, Afghanistan is the worst place to be a woman. And many example like this, this list can be prolonged, that they unfortunately committed crimes against our people. Still this war, disgusting war, is going on, and even right now trying to negotiate with terrorist Taliban, as these 12 years were saying to our people, "We are there to fight against Taliban and al-Qaeda," but now U.S. officials and puppet regime of Karzai shamelessly publicly they say that Taliban are not their enemies

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anymore and going to negotiate with them, invite them to join this puppet, corrupt mafia regime.

AMY GOODMAN: The news agency Agence France-Presse reports the U.S. plans to pull out the bulk of its 57,000 troops in Afghanistan by the end of 2014 and has tentative plans to retain a smaller force of around 10,000 forces after that. On Monday, U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said he hoped an accord on the future U.S. military presence in Afghanistan would be in place by November. Hagel said, "We're working with President Karzai and his government to get that bilateral security agreement completed and signed," unquote. However, President Karzai has insisted Afghanistan would not be rushed over the negotiations and has even hinted an agreement might not be finalized before presidential elections in April next year. Let's talk about the U.S. presence now in Afghanistan and the future plan for bases and a base of operations for counterterrorism forces, Malalai Joya.

MALALAI JOYA: Yeah, as I briefly said, as tip of the iceberg example of the brutalities and war crime of the U.S. and also these fundamentalist warlords, even Taliban, who both of them their godfather is the U.S.

And regarding the withdrawal of the troops, just a few thousands of the troops will withdraw, to deceive justice-loving people of the U.S. and around the world, as they're under pressure of justice-loving people of these countries because of this endless war there, but their military bases remain there, as nine major military bases now. They are working on it and going to legalize this. And also, that they raise this propaganda that civil war will happen if we leave Afghanistan. Behind of this, also the hand of the U.S., to make afraid the people to accept these military bases. I believe as long as in a country which has foreign military bases, U.S. military bases, they can't expect that they have independence.

And same in my country, when we don't have independence, talking about democracy, women rights, human rights is just a painful joke. And also that everyone know now—it became clear for Afghan people, too—that the U.S. is there for their own strategic, regional, economic and political interests. They don't take care to the well wishes of these Afghan people, and they are there for their own evil agendas, as now trying to bring these terrorist Taliban also in power under the name of national peace reconciliation, as I believe such kind of so-called peace will be more dangerous than the current war, because the result of this peace will be—become united the enemies of Afghan people—Taliban, warlords, these drug lords, terrorists. And also the puppets of Russia, call them—our people call them Khalki and Parchami—as recently attorney general of Holland released a list of 5,000 innocent people, most of them intellectuals, who were massacred and killed by a puppet of Russia, as now they have high posts in Karzai's regime. So U.S. trying to make more powerful their puppet regime, then also their military bases

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remain there, then even indirectly and also in a different way, they continue to their barbarism and control Afghanistan.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you think the U.S. forces should remain there?

MALALAI JOYA: They must leave Afghanistan as soon as possible. They should leave Afghanistan now, as they occupied our country. We have proudful history, never accept occupation. And they still push more Afghanistan toward the Stone Ages by supporting these terrorists, as the presence of these troops make much harder our struggle for justice and democracy, and create more obstacles for true democratic-minded elements

AMY GOODMAN: Can you talk about the night raids, the Joint Special Operations Command, JSOC? What's happening now in Afghanistan with U.S. troops there, what they are doing?

MALALAI JOYA: Yeah, as I said, U.S. troop is there for this criminal war, since the war, as they occupied our country, will not leave Afghanistan voluntarily soon, as situation for millions of Afghan by presence of tens of thousands troops is like hell, especially in Farah provinces. And women, still they are the most and prime victims, and they—for example, rapes, domestic violences, acid attacks, burning the girls' schools, and many other violence is increasing more and more, as right now I'm following the case of Shakila, a 16-years-old girl who has been raped and killed by a member of the provincial council and three other parliamentarian so-called member of Parliament. They are partner in this case in trying to forge the medical report of the raped girl. And even a few kilometers away from Kabul just a few months ago, a [inaudible] young girl has been prosecuted publicly by one of the criminal fundamentalist party, Hezb-e Islamic party, that run by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, this terrorist. Also Taliban in different provinces, they are doing public executions, without at least to bring these women to this fundamentalist or mafia court that we have. And many other example like this, that they control Afghanistan day by day, they are getting powerful. That's why we want the withdrawal of the troops as soon as possible from Afghanistan, because they double our miseries and sorrows of our people. And if, honestly, they leave, at least these warlords and these Taliban, these terrorists, will not be more powerful, to be easier for them to eliminate democratic people of Afghanistan and suffer or kill innocent people there.

AMY GOODMAN: What kind of response are you getting from people in the United States? I mean, for many who are just standard consumers of the media, the war in Afghanistan is hardly talked about

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MALALAI JOYA: Yeah, you know, the support that we received from justice-loving American people, day by day, it's getting more and more, as I have experienced personally, on behalf of suffering people of Afghanistan, that each time when I travel, I come in the U.S., I see more people come and listening and announce their support, as now it become like an open secret for justice-loving people around the world, especially for the U.S. people. And as always, I say that—about the role, negative role of these occupiers there, and about their brutalities and also brutalities and barbarism of these fundamentalists that who are a puppet of the U.S., we need their support. Especially I'm asking for educational support, as I believe it's a key against occupation, against fundamentalism, toward emancipation. And we really need their support, as practically when we see, it gives us more hope, courage, determination, but we need more.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, I want to thank you very much for being with us. Malalai Joya is an activist, former member of Parliament from Afghanistan, author of *A Woman Among Warlords: The Extraordinary Story of an Afghan Who Dared to Raise Her Voice*. Again, Malalai Joya was named one of the most influential people in the world, top 100, in 2010 by Time magazine. In 2011, The Guardian listed her among the top 100 women activists and campaigners.

And that does it for our broadcast. By the way, to keep you updated, Herman Wallace remains alive, one of the Angola Three. His conviction was just overturned. He left prison on Tuesday and remains in a New Orleans hospital, dying of advanced liver cancer. You can go to our website for more details at democracynow.org