

The Truth Revealed By The "Kill Teams" In Afghanistan

Written by Zmag
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This is full version of an article by Malalai Joya published on The Guardian yesterday

Malalai Joya, [Zmag](#), March 31, 2011



The disgusting and heartbreaking photos published last week in the media are finally bringing the grisly truth about the war in Afghanistan to a wider public. All the PR about this war being about democracy and human rights melts into thin air with these pictures of US soldiers posing with the dead and mutilated bodies of innocent Afghan civilians.

I must report that Afghans do not believe this be a story of a few rogue soldiers. We believe that the brutal actions of these "kill teams" reveal the aggression and racism which is part and parcel of the entire military occupation. While these photos are new, the murder of innocents is not. Such crimes against civilians have sparked many protests in Afghanistan and have sharply raised anti-US sentiments among ordinary Afghans.

I am not surprised that the mainstream media in the United States has been reluctant to publish these images of the US "kill teams" who made sport out of murdering Afghans. There is, after all, a concerted effort to keep the reality of Afghanistan out of sight in the U.S. After all, General Petraeus, now in charge of the US-led occupation, is said to place great importance on the "information war" for public opinion, and based on this strategy, the Pentagon has tried hard to cover up these crimes.

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Although few soldiers seen on these photos are being prosecuted, but I think this is another effort to hide larger human rights violations carried out by the US in Afghanistan. They must first prosecute those responsible for killing 65 women and children in Ghaziabad of Kunar in mid-February, for killing 150 civilians in Kundz province in October 2009, for killing over 140 civilians in Balabluk of Farah province in May 2009, for killing 100 children and women in Azizabad of Herat in September 2008 and many more such inhuman crimes for which the Pentagon only said a "sorry" and forgot it. I think, if the US is really honest, then first of all top US officials from Roberts Gates to Gen. David Petraeus, under whose command all of these war crimes take place, must be put on trial.

Yet while the US and NATO are busy in war crimes in Afghanistan, they attack Libya to punish Qaddafi for human rights violations! For us, this is like a real joke when we see the US government whole-heartedly supporting many much dirtier Qaddafi's in my country.

Last week, in fact, my initial application for a US entry visa was turned down, and so my ongoing book tour in the United States was delayed as supporters demanded my right to enter the country. The US government, however, was pressured to relent and allow my visit to go ahead. Ultimately they will also be unable to block out the truth about the war in Afghanistan.

The "kill team" images will come as a shock to many in Europe and North America, but to Afghans it is really nothing new. For the past decade, we have seen countless incidents of US and NATO forces killing innocent people like birds.



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For instance, they recently killed nine children in Kunar Province who were out collecting firewood in the mountains. One out of countless massacres of innocent civilians took place in mid-February of this year when US-led forces killed 65 innocent villagers, most of them women and children. In this case as in many others, NATO claimed that they had only killed insurgents, even though local authorities acknowledged that the victims were civilians. To keep the facts from coming out, they even arrested two journalists from Al-Jazeera who attempted to visit and report from the site of the massacre.

The US and NATO have tried hard to hide these civilians deaths by calling all of the dead terrorists or insurgents. Afghans regard such lies as a second slap from their side and an insult to their loved ones who have been brutally killed by them.

Successive US officials have said that they will safeguard civilians and that they will be more careful, but in fact they are only more careful in their efforts to cover up their crimes and stop its publication in the media, therefore many horrified killings are never reported. The US and NATO, along with the office of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, usually give statistics about civilian deaths which underestimate the numbers killed by the occupying forces. The reality, however, is that civilian deaths are up since Obama's increased the number of US troops in Afghanistan. The President's so-called "surge" has only led to a urge of violence from all sides.

Believe it or not, the occupying armies have even tried to buy off the families of their victims, offering US\$2000 for each member of a family killed. Afghans lives are cheap for the US and NATO, but no matter how much they were offering we don't want their blood money.

Once you know all this, and once you have seen the horrific "kill team" photos, you will understand more clearly why Afghans have turned against this occupation. The Karzai regime, which is full of the most infamous brutal warlords of the Northern Alliance, is more hated than ever, because it only rules through intimidation, corruption and the help of the occupying armies, and Afghans deserve much better than this.

However, all this does not mean that more Afghans are supporting the reactionary so-called resistance of the Taliban, who also continue to kill innocent Afghans through suicide bombings. We are seeing the growth, under very difficult conditions, of another resistance, led by students,

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women and the ordinary poor people of Afghanistan. They are taking to the streets to protest the massacre of civilians, and to demand an end to the war. Demonstrations like this were recently held in Kabul, Marzar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Kunar, Herat and elsewhere in the country.

This resistance is inspired by the movements in other countries like Egypt and Tunisia -- we want to see "people power" in Afghanistan as well. And of course we need the support and solidarity of peace-loving people power in the NATO countries as well. Many new voices are speaking up against this expensive and hypocritical war in Afghanistan. This includes some soldiers from the NATO armies.

When I last visited the UK, I had the honour of meeting Joe Glenton, a conscientious objector who spent months in jail for his resistance to the war in Afghanistan. Of his time in prison, Glenton said, "In the current climate I consider it as a badge of honour to have served a prison sentence."

So while the world looks in horror at the "kill team" photos, Joe's courage and humanity is an important reminder that the war in Afghanistan need not last forever.

A version of this article was first published by [the Guardian](#).

Malalai Joya's US speaking tour is ongoing until April 17, 2011. For a full schedule, visit the [website of the Afghan Women's Mission](#)

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