

Fact Sheet on the Current Crisis

(This fact sheet was compiled from information gathered from numerous alternative news sources, including the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. For more information go to www.rawa.org, www.globalfundforwomen.org, www.wluml.org, www.commondreams.org.)

A Brief Chronology

February, 1989: The Soviet Union pulls its troops out of Afghanistan, ending its 10-year war against the Afghan people and the U.S.-sponsored Mujaheddin. The Mujaheddin, a rebel force made up of some 35,000 radical fundamentalist Muslims from 43 Islamic countries, were founded, trained and funded to the tune of \$8 billion by the U.S. government. A primary figure in the Mujaheddin, the young Saudi, Osama bin Laden, forged tactical & ideological links among radical Islamic movements the world over.

1989 - 1992: After "defeating the Soviets" in Afghanistan, the U.S. makes no attempt to rebuild the country now decimated politically and economically by the war. The country collapses into increased factionalism and civil war.

1992 - 1994: The Afghan government, now in the hands of the fundamentalist Mujaheddin, is dangerously unstable, experiencing ever-changing alliances, multiple presidents, and a number of coup attempts. Some 60,000 civilians are killed in just these two years. Osama bin Laden, disillusioned with the Mujaheddin, moves to support the Islamic revolution then underway in Sudan, continuing to build and expand his network of fundamentalist extremists.

October, 1994 : The hard line Taliban militia emerges out of the Afghan chaos, introducing the most extreme form of Islamic fundamentalism.

September, 1996: The Taliban takes the Afghan capital of Kabul and quickly unleashes an unprecedented assault on women's rights -- this in a country where previously women had participated in most aspects of civil society, comprising 70% of all teachers and 40% of doctors. Osama bin Laden, back in Afghanistan since May, is living under the protection of the Taliban. Soon after the Taliban seizes power, bin Laden issues his first declaration of jihad against the U.S., training militants to bring about an Islamic revolution throughout the Arab world.



1997: The U.S.-based Feminist Majority Foundation launches its campaign to end United Nations and U.S. government support of the Taliban regime, citing egregious violations of the human rights of women.

May, 1997: Pakistan becomes the first country to recognize the Taliban. Saudi Arabia & the United Arab Emirates soon follow. Bin Laden pulls in hundreds of trained fundamentalists to fight with the Taliban, which by now controls 90% of Afghanistan. Women's condition has so deteriorated that female suicides become commonplace.

August, 1998: U.S. launches 70 cruise missiles against supposed Afghan bases of Osama bin Laden in retaliation for attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya & Tanzania. The U.N. evacuates most of its people. Despite its anti-terrorist campaign against bin Laden, the U.S. government continues its support of the Taliban.

1999: Bin Laden and the Taliban enlist to fight with the Pakistanis against Indian troops in Kashmir, increasing the influence of radical fundamentalists in Pakistani society.

May, 2001: Despite pleadings from women's rights organizations throughout the world, the U.S. sends \$40 million to the Taliban, citing their cooperation in the "War On Drugs." By this time, Afghanistan is the most poverty-stricken country in the world.

September, 2001: Hijacked airplanes destroy New York's World Trade Center towers and attack the Pentagon. The U.S. stands on the brink of a military invasion of Afghanistan, unleashing a new round of retaliation. Millions flee in terror.



Purple Berets : Women Defending Women

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WOMEN UNITE AGAINST "AMERICA'S NEW WAR"

We are women of this community who, like people around the world, were shocked and saddened by the events of September 11th. But no less shocking has been the insistent drumbeat pulling the nation into another sexist, racist war. As women dedicated to the struggle for women's equality and liberation, we know that struggle is never served by military action. We cannot ignore the effect of such a war on the innocent women and children of Afghanistan and the region. We must stand together to protect our sisters around the world.

These things we know:

- that the weight of war always falls most heavily on women and children, both abroad and here at home.
- that war will only escalate the violence, endangering the safety and security of all humankind and the planet itself.
- that war will only further destabilize an already dangerous world situation and increase the desperate poverty and suffering of the people of Afghanistan and the Southern Asia/Middle East region.

We call for an immediate end to military action; a negotiated, non-military solution to the current crisis; an end to attacks on people of color, particularly Islamic people; and an end to the attack on civil rights now being unleashed by the Bush administration and Congress.

GENDER APARTHEID: Afghan Women Under the Taliban

When the Taliban militia took power in Afghanistan in 1996, they immediately targeted women's rights as a first priority, citing medieval Sharia (Islamic law) as their authority. Women's public life came abruptly to an end; they were brutally forced into silence and invisibility.

While women the world over pressed the United Nations and their own governments to free Afghan women by stopping the flow of arms and of economic and political support for the Taliban, women's rights and lives were sacrificed to the geopolitical needs of male and corporate power. Among the many restrictions the Taliban put in place and violently enforce in their determination to enslave women, Afghan women:

- Cannot appear in public unless dressed in a Burqa, a shapeless bag that covers them from head to toe, making them virtually invisible. Women have been publicly whipped or stoned for accidentally revealing an ankle.
- Are forbidden to work outside the home.
- Are banned from studying in schools or universities.
- Cannot appear in public or ride in a taxi unless accompanied by a close male relative; must travel on "women only" public buses; cannot ride bicycles or motorcycles.
- Are forbidden to deal with male shopkeepers or talk or shake hands with men outside their families.
- Are banned from public celebrations or from appearing on radio or television.
- Are not allowed to gather for any recreational purposes.
- Are forbidden to laugh or talk loudly. (No stranger should hear a woman's voice.)
- Are forbidden to sing.



- Cannot wear brightly colored clothes.
- Are prohibited from practicing family planning.
- Cannot be treated by male doctors. As most female medical providers are internationals who are currently fleeing the country, women injured in the U.S. attack on Afghanistan have virtually no access to health care.
- Cannot be operated upon by a surgical team containing a male member.
- Cannot appear on the balconies of their apartments or houses. Windows must be painted on houses so that women cannot be seen from outside.
- Cannot be photographed or filmed. Women's pictures are banned from newspapers and books, and cannot be hung on the walls of houses and shops.
- Are publicly stoned and sometimes executed if accused of having sex outside of marriage.
- Are banned from playing sports or entering a sport center or club.
- Have no legal recourse. A woman cannot petition the court directly; her testimony is worth half a man's testimony.