



## Afghanistan: Catch the Media's Propaganda

The United States and its NATO allies are withdrawing their forces from Afghanistan. The news is full of reports of how the Americans are leaving Afghanistan and taking their people with them. The media is also focusing on how Afghanistan is falling into a state of insecurity, as the Taliban take control again 20 years after the US invasion.

The media seems set on portraying American forces as a 'savior', who liberated the Afghans and protected the Afghan women. The media is overloaded with reports about how these women are scared and crying out to the American soldiers for protection. This doesn't come as a surprise, the media is a tool of the state and the Western world (and their media), needs to remind people that terrorists exist and America must lead the fight against them.

Of course, the media reports ignore the fact that America's human right's track record is abysmal. Reality shows that they don't respect women within their own societies (#MeToo), let alone protect them when they are invaders in foreign countries. They are happy to give 'Israel' their complete support, despite 'Israeli' brutal treatment of Palestinian women and children. They have been known to look the other way when their troops attack women, and become involved in human trafficking scandals. The Americans certainly should not be seen as protectors of Afghan women. Especially, when the impact of the US presence in the country led people to lose faith that post-2001 Afghanistan would be better." (Source: [Human Rights Watch](#))

### US Presence in Afghanistan

20 years ago, the USA, and their NATO allies, sent their forces into Afghanistan; bombing the country and sending troops in on the ground. Their justification was the Taliban's refusal to hand over Osama Bin Laden; though the truth of the situation is unclear, as it's been reported that the Taliban had not refused outright, but had asked for proof of Bin Laden's role in the 9/11 attacks. Later they asked for negotiations to take place with Washington, but the US President Bush refused ([Al Jazeera](#)). Then later, in October 2001, the Taliban offered to hand over Osama bin Laden to a third party country, in return for an end to the bombing campaign; but the Bush administration didn't accept this either. (Source: [Vox](#))

Contrary to what the current US President Joe Biden said, the USA did use the justification of the need to 'nation build' as a reason to extend their presence in Afghanistan, (according to the internal discussions between former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and former Vice President Cheney and former President George W. Bush) (Source: [Vox](#)).

At the time of invasion, Laura Bush the First Lady and wife to then President George Bush, introduced another justification when she made a link between the US presence and women's rights in her speech, saying, "*Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan, women are no longer imprisoned in their homes. They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment ... The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women.*"

So, what did the "military" gains along with the US desire to 'nation build' and protect the "rights and dignity of women" in Afghanistan mean for the women?

## **1) Loss of their own lives, as well as the deaths of their family, friends and children**

The number of civilian casualties is believed to be very high, but it's difficult to give exact numbers because the USA changed its policy in 2001 and stopped compiling or releasing civilian body counts. (Source: [Fortune](#))

But in 2017, the US military “relaxed its rules of engagement for airstrikes in Afghanistan, which resulted in a massive increase in civilian casualties. From the last year of the Obama administration to the last full year of recorded data during the Trump administration, the number of civilians killed by U.S.-led airstrikes in Afghanistan increased by 330 percent.” (Source: [Brown University](#))

There were “night raids that turned into summary executions targeting people who had the bad luck to live in a contested district” (Source: [Human Rights Watch](#))

Other than these examples, there have been a number of shocking attacks. Some of which were:

2001: The militias (some of whose members hold office today) that supported by the US and its allies “carried out systematic attacks on Pashtun villages, raping women, summarily executing civilians, and stealing livestock and land.”

2002: Former Taliban members wrote to the new Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, offering to lay down arms and recognize the government. Instead, they were imprisoned and tortured by the National Directorate of Security (NDS), the intelligence agency created by the CIA in the months after the Taliban's collapse. Others accused of Taliban links – whether true or not – also died under torture in NDS prisons or at CIA black sites. Some ended up at Guantanamo Bay.

2003: In Gardez, a US A-10 Warthog aircraft gunned down nine children in broad daylight.

2009: The massive sustained airstrikes, in western Farah province, that killed almost 100 civilians – mostly children – some of whom were blown into unrecognizable pieces

2015: The U.S. gunship attack on a Médecins Sans Frontières Hospital, which killed 42 patients, doctors, and other medical staff and cast a long shadow over U.S. claims that only insurgent forces were being targeted. (Source: [Human Rights Watch](#))

A 2020 report “revealed that CIA-backed death squads in Afghanistan have killed children as young as 8 years old in a series of night raids, many targeting madrassas, Islamic religious schools... The United States played key roles in many of the raids, from picking targets to ferrying Afghan forces to the sites to providing lethal airpower during the raids...this was part of a campaign of terror orchestrated by the Trump administration that included massacres, executions, mutilation, forced disappearances, attacks on medical facilities, and airstrikes targeting structures known to house civilians.” (Source: [DemocracyNow](#))

## **2) The creation of a corrupt, dysfunctional government that failed to protect women.**

Their ‘nation building’ efforts involved the installation of “a corrupt, dysfunctional Afghan government that was dependent on U.S. military power for its survival.” (Source: [Washington Post](#)) The courts “were known to judge for the party that paid the most, police forces extorted impoverished civilians on a regular basis, and little was done by civil servants without a

bribe.” Many of the “state officials were also predatory warlords who recruited their followers to the civil service with the expectation that they would enrich themselves through bribes.” (Source: [The Conversation](#)) And the justice system largely ignored a 2009 law that “makes 22 acts toward women criminal offenses, including rape, battery, forced marriage, preventing women from acquiring property, and banning a woman or girl from going to school or work.” (Source: [Bloomberg](#))

So, rather than helping women, they gave them a government that kept them in a state of insecurity and used “abusive warlords to fill security and political leadership roles” despite the fact that those warlords were involved in the drug trade and were known for abusing civilians. (Source: [Human Rights Watch](#))

### **3) The impact of the invasion on the Afghan people**

Is it any wonder that US President Biden wants to distance himself from his predecessors ‘nation-building’ statements, when the legacy of America’s invasion in Afghanistan has caused such misery for the Afghani people?

Today, Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.” (Source: [Bloomberg](#)) It is “one of the poorest countries in the world, with 6 out of 10 Afghans living in poverty and a GDP per capita of some \$500 per year, less than 1% of that in the U.S... and the war economy has forced many Afghans into deeper poverty, all while enriching drug barons and regime-linked warlords.” (Source: [The Conversation](#))

The situation of women and children in Afghanistan did not improve either. “The rate of maternal mortality, with 1.6 women dying for every 100 births, has hardly budged since the Taliban ruled in the late 1990s.” (Source: [The Conversation](#))

While some women were able to join the labor force, and children have had access to primary education in the past 20 years, only 1 in 10 Afghan children finish high school. And “in many rural areas, the situation of women and girls has gotten worse: Not only did they not receive quality aid or education, but they had to contend with extreme poverty, threats of violence and the insecurity of war.” (Source: [The Conversation](#))

In fact, “84% of Afghan women are illiterate and only 2% of women have access to higher education. So, when Western politicians try to justify the 20-year occupation and war by citing the great advancements made by Afghan women, especially in education, they’re not being entirely truthful.” (Source: [Middle East Monitor](#))

## **What the media conveniently ignores**

### **1) The importance of Afghanistan to the USA**

A study of Afghanistan shows that the US interest in the country has been due to its importance as a geo-strategic country. It is a landlocked country which neighbors China, Pakistan, Iran and Central Asian countries, and so insecurity and instability in Afghanistan destabilizes the entire region.

It is “the only country in the region which gives open access to the United States and NATO Allies”; the “Silk Road passes through Afghanistan and the Khyber Pass, located between Afghanistan and Pakistan, has long been one of the most important trade routes and strategic military locations in the world.” (Source: [NATO](#)) “Even though Afghanistan has several oil reserves in the north and of strategic minerals in the south, its main value is given by its geopolitical situation; Afghanistan becomes a transit place for the energy resources

coming from Iran and Turkmenistan to Pakistan, India, and even China.” (Source: ANALYSIS DOCUMENT OF THE IEEE 12/2011)

A study of US policy shows that they have an interest in maintaining direct or indirect control in any country that has geostrategic and geopolitical importance, or has resources that they can exploit- Afghanistan has both. As such, US interest in the area isn't a surprise- and it will not diminish in the future. Understanding this is important, because the USA and its allies always put national interest before protection of the people. The evidence supports this, and exemplifies how we can't possibly believe that the US cares about the Afghan people and Afghan women, despite statements made by Nancy Pelosi! This is just American hypocrisy as they attempt to cover up the reality of their actions and intentions.

After the Taliban gained power in the 90's, “the US tacitly supported the Taliban's domination of Afghanistan... Due to these strategic interests of natural gas and geopolitics, once the Taliban started gaining territory in Afghanistan, the US did not protest nor did they discourage US allies such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan from supporting the Taliban regime.” (Source: Kim Berry, 2003)

“As the Taliban's influence grew in Afghanistan, the US chose to ignore the Taliban's mounting human rights violations. There was no US critique of the Taliban when they captured Herat and threw thousands of girls out of school in 1995; rather the capture of Herat by the Taliban was celebrated by many US policy makers as a boon to Unocal's proposal pipeline... When the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, the US government remained silent despite the accompanying massive human rights violations against women and political opponents. Once more the US governments saw the Taliban as a boon to Unocal. And while the US is not known to have provided direct military aid to the Taliban, it is certainly acquiesced to the support of the Taliban through its allies, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan- thus allowing them to channel not only military funding, but even substantial numbers of military personnel into the area.” (Source: Kim Berry, 2003)

### **We shouldn't be surprised**

The situation in Afghanistan is as expected - especially when you consider the USA's track record of military interventions in countries like Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Haiti. Whether or not you agree with the Taliban has no basis here - what's important to understand is that America and their army has their own interests at heart; wielding human rights and women's rights as a weapon to pursue their foreign interests when it suits them, and ignoring it when it doesn't.

In Afghanistan, the women's rights issue didn't become an issue until it suited their foreign policy and now, keeping the fear of the Taliban threat alive is helpful to them - either to justify their past invasion or to explain their future interference in the country. Because they aren't giving up control of Afghanistan - they are just changing their tactics, and keeping their counterterrorism operations alive.

#Afghanistan #Afganistan #أفغانستان#

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by**

**Fatima Musab**

**Member of the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir**