

THEY'RE PRESIDENT OBAMA'S WARS NOW: IS THIS WHAT PEOPLE VOTED FOR? BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW



THE VOTERS IN NOVEMBER 2008 SPOKE LOUD AND CLEAR: They rejected the disastrous wars of George W. Bush, the lies, the torture, the horrible waste of lives and resources. President Barack Obama, on his first day in office, promised that the Guantanamo prison would close within a year. "Gitmo" was created by the Bush-Cheney regime, on U.S.-occupied Cuban territory, to make sure the torture and military "trials" there would be beyond any scrutiny by American courts or Constitutional protections.

Where are we, more than a year later? Guantanamo remains open, with many of its prisoners slated for "permanent detention" without trial. U.S troops are still in Iraq while the promise of "democratic elections" there crumbles. Tens of thousands more soldiers and Marines are deployed to Afghanistan – and to be fair to president Obama, he said during the campaign he would do this – supporting the government of Hamid Karzai, who was declared "reelected" as Afghan president after fraud and violence so massive that a runoff election couldn't even be conducted.

A troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, Obama claims, will begin in summer 2011 when Taliban "strongholds" have been conquered and turned over to Afghan army and police forces, the "government in a box" that General Stanley McChrystal talks about. But no military or political observer really believes that the Afghan Taliban will be eliminated in this way, especially since the Taliban continue to be supported by parts of the military and intelligence services of Pakistan – which are also heavily U.S.-funded, of course.

In the end, "success" in Afghanistan pretty much means propping up Karzai's coalition of warlords and drug gangsters so that political negotiations can ultimately bring "moderate non-al-Qaeda Taliban" into the Afghan government – in other words, a broader coalition of gangsters. Meanwhile, "success" in Iraq would mean withdrawing most U.S. troops without Iraq becoming the next Somalia. Far from the "victory" that the Bush-Cheney gang proclaimed (remember "Mission Accomplished"?), this is a salvage operation to prevent the United States' defeat in Iraq from becoming a complete catastrophe.

Is this what people thought they were voting for?

a statement of the
SOLIDARITY anti-war
working group
www.solidarity-us.org

With Misery for All

For the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan, everything about the U.S. interventions since 9/11 – and before, for that matter – has already been catastrophic. Hundreds of thousands of civilians dead; wedding parties bombed, families wiped out, innocent people kidnapped and tortured, all “by mistake;” enormous communal violence, ethnic cleansing and retaliation, suicide bombings in marketplaces; these reports are so commonplace they fade into the daily background noise.

We in the United States are big losers too. Huge chunks of our democratic rights have been torn away under the Patriot Act – which the Democratic-controlled Congress just renewed -- and massive government surveillance and intimidation of immigrant communities and social activists. Our society is poorer, less free and more hated internationally. Because of the trillion-dollar costs of these imperialist wars, we’re told we “can’t afford” national health insurance, decent schools or repairs to disastrously collapsing bridges and roads, let alone public investment in environmentally sustainable energy.

Meanwhile, the United States and Israel are escalating the threats against Iran. While Bush and Cheney believed they could smash Iran and create “regime change” with U.S. and Israeli military power, the Obama administration is trying to build a broader global alliance for sanctions. The end result, however, is equally dangerous – more so now as the Iranian regime itself, internally fractured and at war with its own population, may be incapable of a coherent and rational policy.

President Obama inspired the Arab and Muslim world with his speech promising a new and open policy, especially an end to the Israeli occupation and the creation of an independent state for the Palestinian people. The promise has turned to ashes: Israeli settlement construction and demolition of Palestinian homes continues with ever-increasing brutality, the United States continues to support the near-starvation of Gaza and Congress voted almost unanimously to condemn the Goldstone Report on war crimes in last year’s Israeli invasion of Gaza.

What to Do Next

Facing the prospect of endless imperial wars and Washington’s Iron Fist policy toward Palestine, how can the antiwar movement respond and rebuild?

FIRST, it’s important to raise one simple and clear demand on the U.S. government: “Bring All the Troops Home Now!” That’s the only way to end the disasters that these wars have brought to the peoples of Iraq, Afghanistan and our own country. Most of the American people do not believe these wars can be “won;” they need to be convinced that they have the power to end the wars.

SECOND, we need to be very clear in demanding “No Sanctions, No War with Iran.” Not only are U.S. and Israeli threats playing with fire, but they damage the heroic struggle of the Iranian people against the brutal dictatorship. Our movement must demand Hands Off Iran both because we reject imperialism and because we support the battle for democracy inside Iran.

THIRD, to defend the Palestinian people, it is essential now to take up the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against the Israeli state and especially U.S. corporate complicity with the Occupation. This is a diverse movement, in which each of our peace and social justice organizations should try to participate in the most constructive and strategic way.

It is not likely that any of these struggles will achieve victory in the short run. The antiwar movement must be rebuilt almost from the beginning. But its struggles are critical for a sane and sustainable world.

SOLIDARITY is a revolutionary socialist, feminist and anti-racist organization with branches and members throughout the United States. You can find out more about us on our website: www.solidarity-us.org. You can also email us at info@solidarity-us.org or call 313-841-0160.