

VOICES FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

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Dear Friends,

In August of this year we read horrifying reports about how floodwaters ravaged hundreds of villages in Pakistan's heartland, while aid workers warned that bloated rivers would soon surge into the country's south, prompting more evacuations. The flooding has killed some 1,500 people in both Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan and affected at least 20 million people according to the UN. An August 17th UNICEF report said that 6 million children are in desperate need of clean water to stave off certain outbreaks of disease. "UNICEF is now reaching 1 million with clean water," the report states. "We need your help to provide for the 5 million others in critical need ... and the tens of millions more who have seen their lives disappear with the floodwaters."

In addition to unexpected natural disasters, Pakistanis and Afghans cope always with impoverishment affecting the majority of their populations. "A quarter of all children born in Afghanistan die before the age of five," according to a March 3, 2010 Save the Children report. "Nearly 60% of children are malnourished and will not recover from the physical and mental damage done by not having nutritious food early in life." Children suffering from malnourishment or lacking potable water fall ill and have minimal access to health care. Many who contract malaria don't receive medicines. Among the agricultural laborers who constitute the majority in Afghanistan, families typically have 10 – 15 children. Those who are age five and up are expected to help the family as laborers. The overall literacy rate in Afghanistan is 36.4 per cent; the rate for women and girls is, however, 15.8 per cent. Statistics about poverty, infant mortality, and child labor in Afghanistan make it all the more shocking to learn that it costs one million dollars to maintain one U.S. soldier in Afghanistan for one year.

In May/June of 2010 Simon Harak, SJ, Josh Brollier, and Kathy Kelly formed a Voices delegation to Pakistan and Afghanistan, trying to learn more about experiences of people who bear the brunt of U.S. warfare in both countries.

Kathy and Josh were guests of an Italian NGO, "Emergency," in Afghanistan, for six days, living with Emergency hospital staff in the province of Panjshir and the capital city of Kabul. They accompanied staff members on their weekly trips to various FAPs (First Aid Posts) that the hospitals maintain in small outlying villages. Emergency has been providing surgery and basic health care in Afghanistan since 1999.

From their diary:

Unlike ourselves, the Emergency staff doesn't ask many questions about what brings patients to their hospital. Their all-consuming task is to help the patients leave the hospital further down the path of healing and, if possible, physical rehabilitation.

Still, they can't help but feel frustrations.

Anil, a physical therapist, suggests that the concrete used for protective blocks surrounding U.S. bases and checkpoints could build as many as ten dams to provide electricity for people.

Felippo, a nurse, notes that the Italian government spends one million dollars every day to maintain Italy's military presence in Afghanistan. "What could we do with just one day of their funds!?" asks Felippo. "We could build another hospital."

"The price of fuel for one of the U.S. warplanes roaring overhead, on a routine flight between Bagram and Kabul, could allow many creative choices if it were made available to an Afghan village," said Mr. Noor Akbari, an analyst working for the Ministry of Agriculture. "Villagers could build a health center, buy a communally owned pump, get assistance to spray the trees, hire a midwife, or organize agronomy training and literacy programs."

As the war drags on, the U.S. will spend billions of dollars to train Afghan soldiers and police. Certainly, in light of UN statistics, many of Afghanistan's future fighters will suffer the lifelong consequences of

chronic malnutrition and stunted growth because they were underfed and overworked during their childhood years.

Yet, in the Bamiyan province of Afghanistan, an extraordinary group of youngsters have formed "Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers." We first spoke with representatives of their group through a skype phone call during a 12-day fast organized by the "Witness Against Torture" campaign. The young people had learned of the fast and wanted to accompany us. Prior to the call, we had met to brainstorm useful questions we might ask our young companions, but, during the call, Carmen Trotta spontaneously decided to ask the youngsters if they'd ever heard of Dr. Martin Luther King, whose birthday happened to be celebrated on the day of the call. The youngsters exuberantly delivered quotations they had memorized from various speeches by Dr. Martin Luther King.

In subsequent conversations with Hakim, a coordinator of Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, we learned of his passionate commitment to negotiation, dialogue and peace.

A small delegation of Voices activists plans to visit Pakistan and Afghanistan in October and November of 2010. They hope to meet with the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers. Please stay in touch with our website for eventual reports from Jerica Arents, David Smith-Ferri, Kathy Kelly, Mike Ferner and Brian Terrell as they travel in Pakistan and Afghanistan this autumn.

We look forward to working with all of you to build a better world by furthering dialogue and partnership with our Afghan, Pakistani, Iraqi and other brothers and sisters who bear the ongoing consequences of U.S. wars,

Sincerely,

Voices For Creative Nonviolence
Kathy Kelly, Gerald Paoli, Mary Dean, Mohamed Abdel-Magid, Joshua Broilier, Jerica Arents, and Jewell Gregory

Atrocities in Afghanistan: A Troubling Timetable *Updated* By Voices co-coordinators

Since April of 2009, Voices activists have maintained a partial listing of unarmed civilians killed by U.S. led ISAF/NATO troops in Afghanistan. All of the information we've assembled is available in the mainstream news. We realized that we ourselves

were not paying close enough attention, - we weren't pausing to ask questions and absorb the details, and so we've tried in the past several months to carefully update the "Afghan Atrocities" timetable. We invite others to join us in considering ways to express remorse and condolence to the people whose loved ones have been killed.

It's important to note that President Obama has set "a clear and achievable mission-to-disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda and its extremist allies and prevent their return to either country."

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/weekly-address-president-obama-outlines-steps-taken-protect-safety-and-security-ame>) Yet, the U.S. director of the National Security Agency, Jim Jones, has acknowledged that there are only 50 to 100 Al Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan and 300 to 400 members of the group in Pakistan.

Before he was fired for insubordination, General McChrystal acknowledged that U.S. forces have killed civilians who meant them no harm. During a biweekly videoconference with US soldiers in Afghanistan, he was quite candid. "We've shot an amazing number of people and killed a number and, to my knowledge, none has proven to have been a real threat to the force," said General McChrystal.

Those families and individuals that General McChrystal referred to should be our primary concern. How can we compensate people who have endured three decades of warfare, whose land has been so ravaged that, according to noted researcher Alfred McCoy, it would cost \$34 billion dollars to restore their agricultural infrastructure? The \$33 billion dollar supplemental funding bill passed by the U.S. Congress to pay for U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq could have been directed toward helping Afghanistan replant its orchards, replenish its flocks, and rebuild its irrigation systems.

The list below describes, in part, the suffering and agony that people in Afghanistan endured during just one half-month of warfare. To focus on this list doesn't excuse atrocities committed by Taliban fighters. It does indicate our own responsibility to urgently educate others and ourselves about U.S. led ISAF/NATO attacks against unarmed civilians.

Date: Friday, August 20, 2010

Place: Pusht Rod district of Farah province

Circumstances: According to an ISAF Joint Command report, issued on August 21, 2010, a woman and two children were accidentally killed by an air attack. The report states that six insurgents were killed as they got out of a vehicle and several other suspected militants were detained during an operation in the Pusht Rod district of Farah province.

“Also during the operation,” the report states, “a civilian woman and two children were accidentally killed when a coalition force air weapons team engaged the insurgents.”

U.S./NATO acknowledgment that Coalition forces killed unarmed civilians: "We deeply regret what occurred on yesterday's operation," U.S. Army Col. Rafael Torres, a spokesman for NATO, said in expressing condolences to relatives. "We are taking a step-by-step approach in investigating what went wrong."

(<http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/security-force-targets-taliban-foreign-fighter-facilitator-in-farah.html>)

Date: August 17, 2010

Place: Arghandab district of Kandahar province

Circumstances: During a fire fight, a civilian irrigating a field was shot and killed when a joint force being attacked by insurgents returned fire.

Initial U.S./NATO response: Coalition forces plan to meet with local elders about the incident, which remains under investigation.

(RAHIM FAIEZAP NewsAug 18, 2010 03:23 EDT)

Date: August 12, 2010

Place: Lashkar Gah district, Loyadera area of Helmand Province

Circumstances: ISAF (International Security Assistance Forces) said they were investigating a report that NATO airstrikes killed civilians during a NATO/ISAF operation. Four wounded and three dead Afghan civilians were brought to a nearby checkpoint. They had been in a building which was attacked by aerial bombardment. Two of the wounded civilians later died.

U.S./NATO acknowledgement that Coalition forces killed unarmed civilians: On August 15, the ISAF said it believes there is evidence civilians were in the compound targeted by coalition forces during the operation.

(<http://www.dvidshub.net/news/54620/lashkar-gar-evidence-points-isaf-caused-civilian-casualties>)

Date: August 12, 2010

Place: Musa Qal' ah district of Helmand province

Circumstances: According to an ISAF Joint Command report issued on August 12, 2010, Afghan and coalition forces were attacked by Taliban fighters with small arms. They returned fire and “an Afghan civilian woman was shot by International Security Assistance Force soldiers. The woman was given immediate medical attention by coalition forces, but subsequently died of her wounds”

U.S. /NATO acknowledgement that the person

killed was an unarmed civilian: ISAF officials deeply regret this unfortunate loss of life and express their sincerest apologies to the family.

(<http://www.isaf.nato.int/.../isaf.../afghan-woman-killed-during-fire-fight-in-helmand.html>)

Date: August 11, 2010

Place: Sayed Abad district of Wardak Province

Circumstances: Provincial spokesman Shahedullah Shahed told AFP that “Coalition and Afghan forces went to a house to capture a Taliban commander. During the attack unfortunately three civilians were killed.” On Thursday, Aug. 12, 2010, an AP photo showed a crowd of about 300 villagers who yelled 'Death to the United States' and blocked a main road in eastern Afghanistan on Thursday as they swore that U.S. forces had killed three innocent villagers, officials said.

Initial U.S./NATO response: August 12, 2010 ISAF spokesman Captain Ryan Donald said three "insurgents" had been killed in the raid.

U.S. /NATO acknowledgement that the person killed was an unarmed civilian: None, as yet. The case is still under investigation.

Date: August 5, 2010

Place: Nangarhar province, eastern Afghanistan

Circumstances: According to The Pak Tribune (<http://paktribune.com/news/index.shtml?230390>), a vehicle carrying a coffin and a dead man's relatives was bombed and eleven civilians, including women and children, were killed.

Initial U.S./NATO response: August 5, 2010--

According to The Jakarta Globe

(<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/afp/nato-strike-kills-at-least-12-afghan-civilians-official/389696>), NATO's ISAF said it had operated in the area on Wednesday and was "aware of civilian casualty allegations as a result of these operations and is conducting an investigation."

U.S. /NATO acknowledgement that Coalition

forces killed unarmed civilians: August 5, 2010 --

"Coalition forces deeply regret that our joint operation appears to have resulted in civilian loss of life and we express our sincerest condolences to the families," said Rear Admiral Greg Smith, ISAF Director of Communication. "We will partner with the Government of Afghanistan to conduct a thorough investigation of this incident, and to provide solatia to the families of the civilians killed during the engagement."

(<http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/isaf-confirms-civilians-killed-during-operation-that-removed-large-number-of-taliban-from-nangarhar.html>)

Voices is committed to creating a weekly update of this listing. Posted at www.vcnv.org, "Atrocities in Afghanistan, A Troubling Timetable" gives details of ISAF/NATO attacks against unarmed civilians from April 2009 to the present.

Updates on Argyle

Dan Pearson biked to Chicago from Luck, WI in the summer of 2005 to live at Francis House Catholic Worker and work with Voices. Over the years he became fluent in Arabic in order to better understand Iraqis who've fled violence in their country. Dan organized cross-country Wheels of Justice bus tours, led a lengthy walk from Chicago to the Republican National Convention in St. Paul, repaired numerous bikes, wrote and spoke extensively following travel to Pakistan, and helped all of us appreciate ways to live more sustainably.

Jeff Leys joined Voices in 2004, after having gone to Iraq immediately before and shortly after the Shock and Awe bombing. Jeff's regular analysis of the U.S. budget helped many people better understand the costs of war at home and abroad. He coordinated Voices work with interns, managed much of our office activity, led Voices activists in lengthy fasts and vigils, designed civil resistance campaigns, and welcomed many people into our work. Jeff's experiences as a nonviolent activist helped him design effective nonviolence trainings in a variety of contexts. Many young people will recall the less formal orientations he offered in our home/office where he always extended the hand of friendship to people who felt interested in our work.

We bade farewell to them this summer and wish them well, but realize that each is irreplaceable in our community. Jeff is working with Anathoth Farm and with Nukewatch in Luck, WI. He plans to gain certification as a math teacher and will likely attend law school in the future. Jeff aims to emphasize labor law and criminal defense/public defender law. Dan and his partner, Leah, have moved to St. Louis, MO. Dan will help mentor youngsters in an after school program organized by the Center for Survival of Torture. He is "full tilt" into numerous volunteer projects and says they're "digging it down in the Lou."

We look forward to collaborating with them in the future. Our gratitude for their friendship, guidance and hard work is heartfelt and abiding.

We're pleased and fortunate that Jerica Arents, who worked as an intern with us throughout the past year, will be joining us as a full-time volunteer. We also welcome Mary Dean who moved into our home/office on Argyle. Mary has traveled extensively with peace teams to Central America and the Middle East. Her "bio" includes imprisonment for crossing the line at the School of the Americas, several trips driving with Pastors for Peace convoys, a long history of war tax refusal and decades of work as a physical therapist.

Creech 14 Update

The Creech 14 are preparing for trial in Las Vegas on September 14th for an action they participated in last April. After a week of demonstrations and vigils, 14 activists entered Creech Air Force Base (AFB) to highlight the military's use of drones, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Members of the US Air Force based at Creech AFB control the drones used in these expanding wars. After a night in jail, the protesters were given a trespassing charge.

Those arrested include John Dear, S.J.; Dennis DuVall; Renee Espeland; Judy Homanich; Kathy Kelly; Fr. Steve Kelly; Mariah Klusmire; Brad Lyttle; Libby Pappalardo; Megan Rice, SHCJ; Brian Terrell; Eve Tetaz; Louie Vitale, OFM; and Jerry Zawada, OFM.

We learned in July that the U.S. Air Force has selected Ellsworth AFB in South Dakota and Whiteman AFB in Missouri to handle an expansion of unmanned drone flights in Afghanistan, Iraq and other locations. We've also learned that Fort McCoy, WI will receive 8 million dollars to train combat troops for operation of drone aircraft.

Contact Voices for ways to support the Creech 14 and challenge the expansion of drone warfare in the United States.

Photo Credit: Jared Rodriguez / t r u t h o u t



One Nation Demonstration October 2, 2010 Washington D.C.

We hope that a gathering point for many people in our network will happen on October 2, 2010, a date selected for a massive mobilization in Washington, D.C., calling for Jobs, Justice and Peace. The event is sponsored by the NAACP, SEIU local 1199, the AFL-CIO and the recently formed United National Antiwar Committee, of which Voices is a part. Visit www.onenationworkingtogether.org/ for more details about this exciting national mobilization.

Dying In to End Wars

On August 11th, Chris Gaunt was conducting her 17th "Die In" at the Iowa senatorial offices of Senators Harkin and Grassley. That week, she was lying on the floor of Senator Chuck Grassley's office.

Accompanying her was Elton Davis, also of Iowa, who had participated in previous "Die In" actions at the offices of elected representatives.

Before proceeding to "Die In," Chris usually takes a piece of chalk and draws a human outline on the office carpet. Next she sets up several signs that explain her presence at the office and ask the Senator to stop funding the wars and occupations in which the U.S. is currently engaged. She then lies down on the outline in silent vigil.

During Chris's presence at Senator Harkin's office the week prior to August 11th, she was told that she would be arrested and taken to jail if she returned to the Des Moines Federal Building for the weekly "Die In."

True to their word, the Federal Protective Service officers arrived at 5 p.m. when Senator Grassley's office officially closes, and wrote Chris a federal ticket for "Failure to Obey a Lawful Order." When the Des Moines police officers arrived on scene they proceeded to arrest Chris's "dead" body, citing her for criminal trespass and criminal mischief. Chris was then carted off to the Polk County jail. Elton, who was also arrested, was released the following day.

On August 12th, Iowa Judge Brandt gave Chris the maximum bond for each state charge, \$300 per offense for a total cash bond of \$600. After two days,

the Polk County jail released her, even though she hadn't signed a personal recognizance bond. Additionally, they issued her a "Stay Away" order which, if violated, will result in immediate arrest at the office of either Iowa Senator. Chris was joined, on August 18th, by Frankie Hughes, age 12, who was last arrested in Senator Harkin's office on April 7th. Frankie remained inside Senator Harkin's office till 6:00 p.m., when the office staff assured her of a teleconference with the Senator in the near future. She then rejoined Chris Gaunt outside the building. Please visit our website or give us a call for updates on Iowa activists' participation in the Peaceable Assembly campaign. (www.vcnv.org)

Below is an excerpt from Chris's June 17th letter to Senators Grassley and Harkin and their staffs.

The message I have been bringing to your Iowa offices since last February is:
NO MORE \$\$\$ FOR WAR.

I am asking our two long-serving and hard-working Iowa Senators to vote NO on war spending bills AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE. I was proud of Senator Harkin's vote for the Feingold amendment to the supplemental war spending bill because it sent a strong message that 20% of the Senate say it is time for an exit strategy in Afghanistan. A much larger majority of the people out here are sick and tired of these wars that continue to drain our treasury at a time when we need to be addressing pressing concerns here at home. President Obama's 30,000 troop surge in Afghanistan costs us \$1 million per troop per year, while the average annual income of people living in Afghanistan is \$300.

Congress holds the purse strings, and thus the decision to continue or END these illegal occupations is in your hands. I refuse to give up on either Senator.

Photo Credit: Andrea Melendez/The Register
Frankie Hughes and her mother, Renee Espeland



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The Right Messenger
by David Smith Ferri
July, 2010

Last year, unexpectedly and without preamble,
Kathy invited me to travel to Pakistan and Afghanistan
to document, from the fat end of the club,
the criminal impact of Drone warfare . . .
to experience the hospitality and humanity
of Pakistani and Afghan people.

A white haze of questions
familiar and unfamiliar,
blinded me.

But when you died Artis,
as I sought a way to know, a place to stand, a clear
view,

the barometer fell
and a fierce wind rose
to scour my mind
and lift the thick layer of confusion blanketing it.
A sun shone unimpeded.
For the first time in months,
dawn gave the world definition, dimension.

When the cancer in your brain

untied the moorings,
when the small white paper raft of your body
floated from shore,
rocking, circling,
gaining a swifter current in the middle of the stream;
as it approached the edge,
before pitching over and disappearing
into the white swirling mist and foam,
a song escaped, reaching me here.
It roused me, stood me on my feet.

When your eyes' blue crystal blaze dimmed,
day and night the same cold stone,
and the welcoming arc of your smile crumpled,
a hand found me, interlaced its fingers in mine.

That wind, that song, your hand . . .
Mortality, the very thing I'd feared, comforting me,
leading the way.

It was only later, the following week,
when the initial white wave of grief had fallen
and foamed at our feet
and returned to sea, leaving us drenched and empty,

it was only then that I recalled your work
as a Peace Corps volunteer
had been in Afghanistan.