

VOICES

FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

August 2012

Dear Friends,

The last several months have been an action-packed time for us, as we prepared and undertook a 180-mile walk to educate the public about alternatives to NATO's agenda for ever-growing U.S. military dominance over Central Asia. Buddy Bell, Kathy Kelly, Brian Terrell, and many other hardy individuals walked and talked through more than 25 cities between Madison and Chicago.

By the time the NATO summit was finally upon us, Gerald Paoli had organized the Voices reunion, where we were pleased to host Medea Benjamin and David Swanson for crucial public discussions about drone proliferation and the illegality of war. Reunion participants then joined the mass demonstrations meant to identify the more than 50 criminals-in-chief roaming around free in our city.

On a sad note, Sallamah Aliah recently completed her internship with us. However, she plans to still volunteer at the office whenever she can pull herself away from working on her thesis.

In late May, Kathy, Buddy, and Pat Kennelly of Marquette University left for Kabul to spend 2 weeks living in community with the Afghan Peace Volunteers. During their stay, they made short trips within Kabul, visiting 3 schools, a land mines museum, and a hospital run by the Italian grass roots medical organization Emergency. Buddy also was a guest for 2 nights on the floor of a university dorm room, learn-

ing intimate details about young Afghan men's aspirations to a more sane and compassionate Afghanistan. The delegation also met with many visitors to the community house, including the mothers of four 8 to 13-year-old former street vendors turned students, who come over after class each afternoon for supplemental instruction from the APVs.

Kathy recently returned to Kabul in July to find that a seamstress workshop is underway, with about 20 formerly unemployed women participating, Sunday through Thursday, for two hours each morning. English language classes are also being offered on a daily basis: about 15 students gather for two hours each weekday morning. Meanwhile, in collaboration with a Kabul based group of University students, the APVs have launched a photo magazine which should soon be ready for print.

Here, there and everywhere we are all promoting the 2 Million Friends campaign, which was conceived of by the Afghan Peace Volunteers after they learned that approximately 2 million Afghans have died in warfare over the last 4 decades. A new website is under construction which will soon include a map of peace vigils being planned for the December 10 day of action.

In the shorter term, Kathy has been helping Afghan teenagers Ali and Abdulhai through the complicated process of seeking visas to the United States. On the Chicago end, we have been

shoring up support from members of Congress to help us get these visa requests approved, so that Abdulhai and Ali may be able to communicate their thoughts and wishes to the U.S. public. They have received an impressive invitation from Global Exchange and the Movimiento Por La Paz to take part in the Caravan for Peace USA, a campaign to call for an end to the so-called War on Drugs. The APVs hope to highlight the growing role that the opium and marijuana trades have had in exacerbating the violence in Afghanistan. The boys would travel to the U.S. with Hakim, who was granted a visa only after quick action from people like you, who clogged the inbox of the U.S. embassy with emails of support.

We appreciate any donation you can afford to give us at this time. We are anticipating the expenses of three round-trip flights from Afghanistan to the U.S. as well as expenses for the APVs while they are on the caravan. We're also covering monthly rent for the community living space in Kabul, a space which is surely being used for maximum effect in sharing resources. Thank you so much for your support, which lets us take action in accord with our hopes.

Sincerely,

Kathy Kelly, Gerald Paoli, Brian Terrell,
Sallamah Aliah, Buddy Bell,
and Joshua Broliier

Walk to the NATO Summit: Inside Agitators Stride Toward Peace

By Buddy Bell

On what is now the 17th day of our walk from Madison to Chicago, the number 165 does not seem to encapsulate all the progress we have made. We are 17 days and 165 miles away from the day I drove into Madison, where news arrived that Air Force One had descended on pre-dawn Kabul for the forging of the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement.

When I spoke at the May Day rally later the same day, I denounced what all indications show to be Obama's continuing-for-another-decade war in Afghanistan. Almost immediately a lone man in the dwindling crowd started shouting vulgar slurs at me, with a lack of decency that was amazing considering young kids were present.

The psychology of the moment is worth some analysis. What of the people who approached me and thanked me for my speech after I finished— what stopped them from shouting some slogan of affirmation to counter the trash talk? Maybe it was a lack of preparedness to respond, maybe a reluctance to be the first one to take a risk.

An analogy can be made for the United States government, although of course the stakes are infinitely higher. The powerful do hope people will be uninformed and ill-prepared, about NATO or any other pressing issue of justice. They certainly want complacency to carry the day, so no one will jumpstart a movement to reject the belligerent, fake virtues of poverty and war.

The miles go by, and we've now passed through more than 20 cities and had 5 formal speaking stops. Since this campaign started I've heard from people who didn't even know NATO was in

Afghanistan— they now know how the two are linked. Many others have come away with useful new information about NATO and about people in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Bahrain. All people not fundamentally different from ourselves, who wish and hunger for peace and friendship.

Others expressed disbelief that protest can be effective. I maintain that first off, if we suppose it already has made a huge difference, it won't necessarily be obvious what that difference is. It can mean we don't yet have another war. Secondly, it's not necessary to recruit 51% of the public to our ranks, only a critical mass of people to start a chain reaction. Two becomes 4 becomes 8 becomes 16, and after a while, a bigger group offers some anonymity, making



it easier to join. A politician can usually live with one act of protest, and the higher up you go, that politician can easily weather multiple protests. But none can survive opposed to a movement that is growing exponentially.

This walk has been a movement-builder. We've informed and motivated people, and we have received information and motivation from folks along the way— not to mention all the other kinds of physical sustenance we have been given, for which we are very grateful.

We've recently been joined by a group of walkers from New York State, who brought enlarged pictures of some of the kids we know in Afghanistan to tape onto our placards. These young peacemakers are wearing blue scarves, which invoke the blue sky as a common symbol of comfort and peace. No one can buy and sell it, and it touches all nations and cultures. I'm glad the kids will be present with us on the walk in this small way because I know they will move more people to take new steps, commit acts of protest in favor of peace.

Let's hop to it... because Uncle Sam isn't known for his decency.

Voices was happy to have received a small grant from the RESIST foundation, which since 1967 has been funding grassroots organizing efforts such as our walk to NATO. RESIST is located at 259 Elm St; Somerville, MA 02114, telephone 617-623-5110.

Afghan Women: Which Side Are We On?

By Pat Kennelly

Here in Afghanistan, the United States is spending \$2 billion dollars a week on war under the guise of improving Afghanistan. In Chicago at the NATO summit, Hillary Clinton, Madeline Albright and several influential female leaders came together and publicly claimed an American and NATO troop presence in Afghanistan was warranted in order to continue to improve the security of women. The problem is that these influential women are calling for the very thing that makes Afghan women insecure. Further, they are endorsing Afghan leaders who attack women's rights.

Over the last ten years, the U.S. and NATO poured trillions of dollars into the occupation of Afghanistan, opening over 400 military bases around the country. From these bases NATO forces launch hundreds of night raids per month and dozens of drones fill the sky. These NATO operations have caused greater insecurity for women. They create countless widows, destroy homes, and foster a psychological terror that women are not safe and secure, even in their own homes.

It is not only the war that undermines the security and human rights of Afghan women, but the very war making politicians whom NATO supports. In March, President Karzai endorsed a nonbinding edict by Afghanistan's religious authorities, stating that women are inferior to men, women cannot refuse to have sex with their husbands, and women should wear full hijab. The edict stated, "men are fundamental and women are secondary," adding women should avoid

"mingling with strange men in various social activities such as education, in bazaars, in offices and other aspects of life." Further, it sanctioned physical violence claiming "teasing, harassing, and beating women" was prohibited "without a Shariah-compliant reason".



Implementing this type of structural discrimination against women further erodes Afghan women's human rights.

Every day Afghan women beg in the streets and struggle to cope with the mental, emotional, and social pain of living in a war zone. This past winter while billions were spent on NATO military operations hundreds of Afghan women watched their children freeze to death because of a lack of adequate shelter and fuel. In Kabul alone 100 children froze this past winter. Additionally, Afghan women face the second highest maternal mortality rate in the world.

In recent visits to schools, orphanages, and Afghan NGOs, ordinary Afghans did not identify specific ways that NATO or the Karzai government have improved the status of women in Afghanistan. In fact, ordinary Afghans noted that more and more women are suffering from mental illness. Consequently, more and more Afghan women are turning to suicide and self-immolation rather than continuing to live in the current situation.

It is because of all of these factors that in 2011, the Thomas Reuters Foundation identified Afghanistan as the most dangerous place in the world to be a woman.

If Clinton and other world leaders are on the side of improving the security of Afghan women, they should not endorse and support the war and the leaders who are actively engaged in violating women's rights. If Americans are genuinely concerned about this issue, we need to ask why we are using war to promote these goals. Better yet, we should not further insult and harm Afghans by using women as an excuse to continue the war in Afghanistan. We must be honest and acknowledge that we can not safeguard women's human rights by making war and supporting individuals that violate human rights.

Kennelly is the Associate Director of the Marquette University Center for Peacemaking. He is participating in the peacemaking efforts organized by the Afghan Peace Volunteers and Voices for Creative Nonviolence. He can be contacted at kennellyp@gmail.com

The Sky As It Falls

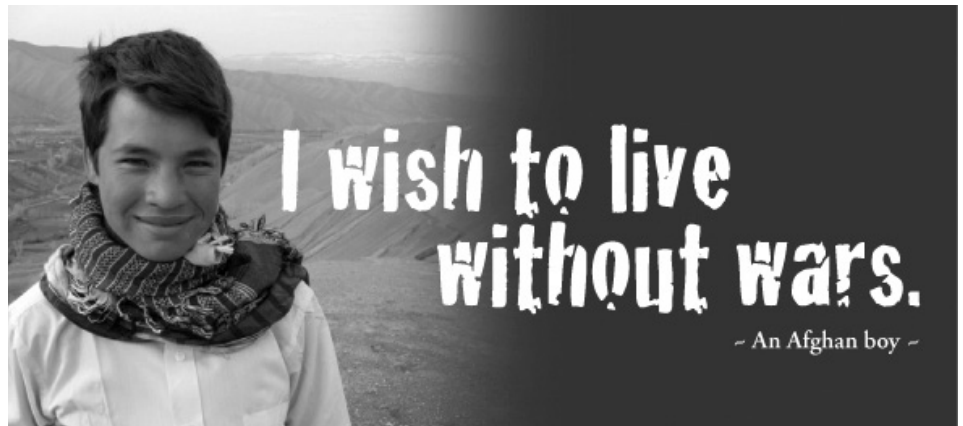
By Kathy Kelly

Kabul--For the Afghan Peace Volunteers, living in a working class area of Kabul's "Karte Seh" district, daily problem-solving requires a triage process.

Last week, upon arrival, I looked at the sagging ceilings over the kitchen, living room and entryway and felt certain that shifting to new living quarters should be the top priority. The following evening, tremors caused by a small local earthquake sent me running out of the house to interrupt a game of volleyball all the others were playing, but cooler heads prevailed and the game continued – what else was there to do? I stayed outside to watch. Later, we talked about the inevitable need to make a move away from our dangerous dwelling and do it soon, so now the daily schedule includes scouring the neighborhood for a new home with comparable space and rent.

Some daily problems are predictable. For example, Ali knows he is behind many other students in the Kabul secondary school he attends, because back in Bamiyan, where he grew up, he'd had limited opportunities to learn the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. On mornings in the APV house, he struggles to make sense of notes he has carefully recorded in class. Early this morning, he was sitting in the yard carefully writing and rewriting a sentence describing the function of the present continuous tense in English, preparing for an English exam later that day. He and I spent some time writing English sentences in the present and present continuous tenses, and then he taught me how to do the same in Dari. Some problems at least have simple solutions.

Abdulhai wants the best for his widowed mother. Like almost every other



Afghan family, Abdulhai has experienced deep personal loss, the loss of his father to war. I remember one late evening in Kabul some months ago when he confided in me and Hakim about the difficult memories of fleeing away from the fighting through the snowy mountains of Bamiyan province where his simple and honest family resides.

Shedding some tears, he said, "I wish I could buy my mother a good pair of shoes. "Abdulhai has a growing commitment to working among fellow Afghan peers and youth to understand and practice non-violence. In 2011, his picture was selected by Fellowship of Reconciliation USA to be featured on the big board at Times Square in New York. It was a poster of Abdulhai on his favorite hills behind his village, with these words reflecting his heart, "I wish to live without wars."

The small community here listens to its members' problems – very much including the needs of their loved ones - and tries hard to sort out cooperative ways to help them respond. Each member of the community comes from a home grappling with problems attendant on economic destitution. Aided by small contributions from peace activists abroad, they creatively "trouble-

shoot" ways to keep their project going.

Meanwhile, they are doing their best to address social problems in the struggling neighborhood around them. This week, after several delays, a workshop for seamstresses has been set up right here in our living quarters. Each morning, eight women, both Pashto and Hazara, come to learn tailoring skills. The Afghan Women's Fund assisted the group by buying eight sewing machines along with fabric, thread, scissors and patterns. With the help of a neighbor who is an accomplished seamstress herself and is willing to teach others to sew for a nominal salary, the women will learn tailoring skills and earn desperately needed income.

Today, we sat with a mother whose child comes to the after school tutoring program Afghan Peace Volunteers launched three months ago. Her husband struggles with an addiction to opium. By collecting laundry from homes near hers and washing the clothing from morning till night, she earns the equivalent of \$3 per day. Hakim asked whether her husband might be able to help earn income, but she said she is afraid to let him out of the house for fear that he'll be drawn back to drug usage. Two of the APVs vouched for

an impressive program we have visited which has helped people overcome their addictions. Some of the people who were helped by the program now run a small restaurant in our neighborhood. Before she left, a meeting was arranged between the young mother and the woman who founded and coordinates this program.

I'm privileged to watch young and vulnerable practitioners of peacemaking risk their own safety to advocate for those even less safe. And poverty, which descends from war, which engenders war, equals danger as surely as war does. It's the ceiling of a collapsing room. Here in Kabul, it's so much harder to escape the connectedness of what Dr. King called the "evil triplets" of poverty, discrimination, and war.

Last summer, in Mexico, a movement arose which aims to bring together people suffering the ravages of multiple wars, encouraging them to pour out their grief together and demand needed social change. The "Caravan of Solace," led by renowned Mexican poet Javier Sicilia, traveled across Mexico several times, reaching many thousands of people in a country where 50,000 people have been killed by drug violence since 2007. This *Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity* (<http://movimientoporlapaz.mx>) insists that militarized solutions will not work.

Now the same organizers will be traveling across the United States as the Caravan for Peace, calling for an end to drug wars and military wars. They will proceed along a multistate route culminating in Washington, D.C. on the 11th of September 2012.

The Afghan Peace Volunteers, who have paid close attention to the Caravan of Solace, were very pleased to speak with one of the main organizers by

phone last summer. Now, their hopes are raised quite high because Caravan for Peace organizers, in coordination with Global Exchange, recently invited them to participate in the caravan during the final ten days of travel across the U.S.

Abdulhai and Ali await an August 5th interview at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, --their opportunity to join the Caravan for Peace and to contribute their perspective to discussions along the route rests on whether consular officials will approve their request for a visa. You can register your support for them in this process here. http://act.rootsaction.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=6382

They would be accompanied by their mentor, Singaporean born Dr. Wee Teck Young, whom we call Hakim.

The U.S. Embassy will want assurance that they will return to Afghanistan, that they won't seek to escape a collapsing roof and a country where it often seems as though the weight of poverty, warfare and discrimination could threaten future collapse. But Ali, Abdulhai and the APVs have realized that they have good work they can do here and now, building on several years of activity developing the Afghan Peace Volunteers. As with many of us, sometimes the work involves setting our own houses in order (and there's always more order we can set them in) and often it involves small actions we can take to help one another. Joining the Caravan for Peace would be a big step for the APVs, giving them a chance to feel solidarity with people from Mexico and across the U.S. who support Afghan Peace Volunteers in their clear and simple message: "We want to live without wars."



We Got Hakim a Visa. Ali and Abdulhai Need Them Too.

http://act.rootsaction.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=6382

Together with our allies (Voices for Creative Nonviolence, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Global Exchange), we flooded the State Department with emails asking them to grant a visa to Hakim, a leading peace activist in Afghanistan. When Hakim re-applied, the U.S. Consulate reconsidered his case and they granted the visa.

But Hakim is a mentor to the Afghan Peace Volunteers. When he visits the United States, at least two of those youth should come with him. Abdulhai and Ali (in photo at right) care deeply about their country. They are not a risk to stay in the United States (as the State Department fears). The only risk is that they will tell us what our occupation of their country is doing, and what they are doing to promote nonviolent alternatives.

Hakim expresses his gratitude and tells Abdulhai and Ali's moving stories here.

Please sign this petition, which will be delivered to the U.S. State Department. Please ask everyone you know to do the same.

http://act.rootsaction.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=6382

If you do not have internet access, feel free to call us at 773-878-3815 to get signed on.

The Bomb and the Drone: The Grim Reaper Keeps Taking Its Toll

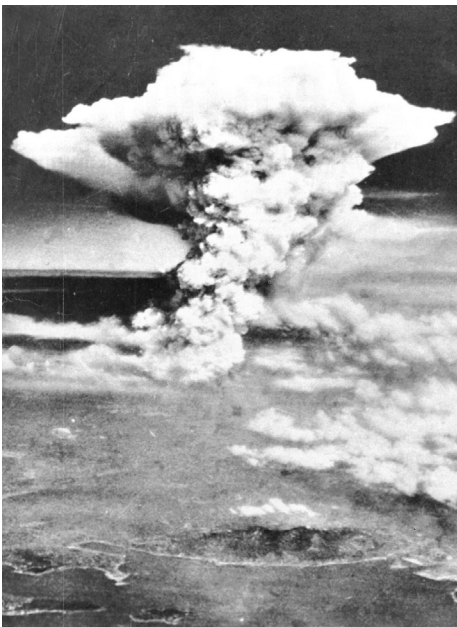
By Ed Kinane

The lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki belong always before us. The agony of those two cities must remain our dark beacon.

Hiroshima/Nagasaki wasn't so much about targets as about audiences. We – or rather, the very highest reaches of the US government – annihilated a couple hundred thousand nameless, unarmed, undefended human beings to warn the world: “Don't mess with us; we run things now.”

Thanks to its atomic prowess – showcased at Hiroshima/Nagasaki – for over 65 years the US has been able to hold the planet hostage. It deploys nuclear blackmail to further its corporations' grip on the world's resources and markets. But such gunboat diplomacy has only partially succeeded.

The Soviets soon acquired the Bomb terrorizing us here in our previously invincible Homeland. So the pitiless logic of proliferation made us all far less safe.



The Big Lie(s)

Every August 6, letters to editors perpetuate the last century's most enduring myth: the Bomb forced the fanatic, loathsome “Japs” to surrender. Japan would not have to be invaded. Thousands of G.I. lives were thereby saved. Thank God for the Bomb!

Never mind that by spring 1945, the US Air Force ruled Japanese skies. Never mind that after merciless firebombing, Japan's major cities now lay in ashes, their people incinerated. Never mind that the US Navy ruled the sea; that not a grain of rice could penetrate its blockade. Never mind that Japan was totally depleted by years of war. Never mind that Japan had already been seeking surrender.

Afghanistan/Pakistan/Yemen echo Hiroshima/Nagasaki. With its new cutting edge technology the Pentagon still trots out the old myth: the Reaper drone is all about “saving our boys' lives.” And Bomb-like, the Reaper proclaims: “If you defy us, wherever you are, we will hunt you down and kill you.” Déjà vu.

Once again, clandestinely and without referendum, the Pentagon has embarked on a new era of terror. To add menace to dread, its robotic warfare comes with almost preternatural surveillance...both over there and, soon, here.

For several years the Pentagon has used high-tech robots like the Predator and the Reaper not only for surveillance, but to blow up people and things in Afghanistan. Defying international law, the CIA uses the Reaper to assassinate nameless “bad guys” in Pakistan. In Yemen the Reaper perpetrates extra judicial executions and even hunts down and kills US citizens. That's what

happens when your name somehow appears on White House “kill lists” reviewed by Mr. Obama himself.

The “beauty” of it is that technicians, wielding joysticks at satellite-linked computers thousands of miles from combat, pilot these unmanned drones. They can deliver – “with laser accuracy” – their Hellfire missiles and 500-pound bombs. And do so with scant knowledge of their non-combatant victims and with no physical risk. Can anything be more disdainful of honor, more disdainful of life?



Mission Creep

The Reaper – piloted from, among other places, my local Hancock Air Base – has become the Pentagon's and the CIA's darling. With no on-board crew, no US personnel die when the Reaper crashes or is hacked or shot down. With few witnesses, with no maimed vets and no awkward body bags shipped home, few ask: Why are we there? Who benefits? What's our complicity? What's become of our humanity?

So opaque is our bubble, so pervasive is the distancing, so unaccountable is drone warfare, that mission creep is guaranteed. Mission creep: the slide into perpetual warfare.

Like Japan's hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties, the Reaper's civilian casualties in Afghanistan/Pakistan/Yemen fail to matter. Few ask: What's the human cost? What's the blowback? We forget that victims anywhere surely have survivors nursing enduring hatred for the US. But – hey, not to worry! – those further security threats keep the pot boiling. And General Atomics, Lockheed and other corporate war profiteers continue to reap their billions.

One day drone missiles may strike Hancock Air Base. And if nearby communities are hit...well, aren't we very accepting of "collateral damage"? Thanks to the Pentagon's love affair with death – and thanks to the trillions we squander on "defense" – the world is much safer...for corporate greed. Most dare not allow themselves to see how those military contracts ravage our already depressed economy.

Fifty nations reportedly are either importing or manufacturing their own drones. This past spring the US sold six weaponized drones to Italy – Italy?! Like nuclear proliferation, drone proliferation will haunt us until the end of our days.

Unless....

Ed is an anti-militarism activist based in Syracuse. He's one of the "Hancock 2," the "Hancock 33," the "Hancock 15," and the "Hancock 38." Reach him at edkinane@verizon.net. He traveled with Voices to Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Support Mark Kenney
In prison 'til mid- November**

Mark Kenney #14018-047
FPC DULUTH
FEDERAL PRISON CAMP
P.O. BOX 1000
DULUTH, MN 55814

Letters and financial support can also be sent to Mark's wife at:
Marie Kenney
12605 Oak Plaza, #108
Omaha, NE 68144

Update: 2 Million Friends to End the Afghan War

Ordinary people all around the world are finding a way to remember 2 million ordinary Afghans who lost their lives to the past 4 decades of war.

A new website for this campaign is projected to come online in mid-August. It will include a petition to call for a cease fire in Afghanistan as

well as a global map of actions being planned for December 10, 2012: the International Day of Human Rights. The website is intended to be an educational resource as well as a networking tool for activists coordinating public vigils, lighting candles, flying kites, and otherwise engaging the public to insist on peace.

Update From Brian Terrell About His Upcoming Trial for Missouri Drone Action

On Monday, September 10, Ron Faust and I will be tried in US District Court in Jefferson City, Missouri, for trespassing at Whiteman Air Force Base, from which killer drones engage in combat in Afghanistan and other places known and unknown by remote control. Along with Mark Kenney, Ron and I attempted, on behalf of a larger group of protestors, to deliver an "indictment" to Brigadier General Scott A. Vander Hamm, the base's commander. Our indictment charged the chain of command, from President Obama to General Vander Hamm to the drone crews at Whiteman "with the following crimes; extrajudicial killings, violation of due process, wars of aggression, violation of national sovereignty, and the killing of innocent civilians." It noted the fact that "extrajudicial targeted killings by the use of unmanned aircraft drones by the United States of America are intentional, premeditated and deliberate use of lethal force in violation of US and international human rights law" and

demanding that these crimes immediately cease.

Our polite request to the base sentries for directions to headquarters to deliver the indictment was denied and our way blocked by military police who handcuffed us and took us away. At arraignment on June 6, Mark pled guilty and was sentenced to four months in prison which he is now serving.

While to government claims that Ron and I "did enter a military installation for a purpose prohibited by law," our intention is to put the illegal and immoral use of drones on trial. This will be the first time a protest against the drones will be tried in federal court. Join us and our expert witnesses Ann Wright, Bill Quigley, Kathy Kelly and Ramsey Clark (tentative list) in court in Jefferson City at 1 pm on September 10 and at a public forum the evening before in Kansas City. Contact me at brian@vcnv.org or at 773-878-3815 for more information.

VOICES

FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

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Come out and hear from Hakim, Abdulhai, Ali and over 100 other activists on the Caravan of Peace as they come to a city near you. The caravan consists mostly of grassroots organizers in the struggle against the absurd drug criminalization and incarceration complex along with activists in the struggle to stop the militarization of the drug war in Mexico, which has only increased the amount of blood being spilled. The APVs hope to join the caravan in Chicago, as they have been invited to share their own reflections about growing up in Afghanistan where the drug trade is one very crucial factor causing the terrifying violence that occurs daily, as well as the rampant lack of criminal accountability. You will also learn what we can do to pressure the U.S. government to stop ignoring or encouraging these crimes.

Peace Caravan

SCHEDULE:

CHICAGO Sept 2-4

CLEVELAND Sept 5

NEW YORK Sept 6-7

BALTIMORE Sept 8-9

WASHINGTON Sept 10-11

Call 773-878-3815 for more
details as they become available.