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No chance of self-determination for Afghans under US occupation: Analyst

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The comments come as NATO has expressed concerns over public reaction to the upcoming 2014 presidential election in Afghanistan. At a joint press conference held in Kabul on Monday, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen called on the Afghan government to ensure a free election in Afghanistan. On October 18, 2012, Afghan President Hamid Karzai warned against interference in Afghanistan's upcoming presidential election, stressing that the presence of foreigners in the country's election watchdog is against the country's sovereignty.

Press TV has talked with Richard Becker, with the A.N.S.W.E.R. coalition from San Francisco to further discuss the topic of the program. What follows is an approximate transcription of the interview.

Press TV: It is interesting to see a military alliance being so concerned about the internal politics of Afghanistan. How do you respond to that?

Becker: Well, I think that this is mostly theater. I think that this is for public relations purposes, that we have Rasmussen making these kinds of statements after meeting with Karzai, being there with Karzai, and the Karzai government is not really a legitimate government.

He was brought into the country, as you mentioned, with the US invading forces and he has remained in the position that is called president, ever since then.

Although really as a president he has less power over what is going on in the military than the lowest ranking NATO military commander in the country and we can see that because over and over again he has issued orders that the US special forces should not be in Wardak, the night raids should stop, the Afghan forces should not call in NATO airstrikes when they are in operations and all these are just completely ignored.

But there is a great concern that as the number of troops go down, not that the US or NATO intend to, really, leave Afghanistan; altogether they do not, they want the Afghan national army to take the place of the US and other NATO combat troops on the ground.

They want to retake control of the country, they are very much afraid that there will be social explosion inside Afghanistan if the next election is perceived to be as completely illegitimate as the previous election.

Press TV: Right, but how much of influence do you think NATO is going to have over these elections which are coming up in Afghanistan and also the type of government which will be formed under a new president?

Becker: Well, you can see in Afghanistan that the vast amount of money that has been pumped into the country it is over six hundred billion dollars since the beginning of the war and tens of millions of dollars in reconstruction aid, that that money has not gone to help the people.

Afghanistan remains one of the very poorest countries in the world. It has the highest infant mortality rate of any country on earth after all this occupation, after all this so-called reconstruction, where has that money gone?

That has gone to the foreign contractors and it has gone to a thin elite of the Afghan population, a tiny sliver of the population and that includes the Karzai family of course and it is from that tiny elite that the next president most likely will be drawn.

And so this is not going to be any more in the interest of the people of Afghanistan than has been the last eleven and a half years of war and occupation.

Press TV: So then that begs a question of course, can Afghanistan see true democracy while the US-led forces continue to occupy the country?

Becker: No, I think that that is exactly the point; that it cannot.

No country can really exercise its right to self-determination nor people can exercise it is true right to self-determination while living under military occupation.

And you can also see, by the way, that the election is being now projected by Hamid Karzai for next April, there will be, really, at the end of winter so there will be a very little opportunity in large parts of the country for there to be anything that will resemble to a genuine campaigning.

So as I said at the beginning, I think that it is theater. The intension is to retain US-NATO control in partnership with the very thin layer of the Afghan population, the elite that live very well while the great majority of the people live in abject poverty.