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US War Crimes against Women: The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA): Interview

By RAWA and Edu Montesanti
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Please tell us about RAWA, you and your struggle, and the difficulties facing your country.

The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), is the oldest women's organization in Afghanistan that fights for freedom, democracy, social justice, and secularism. RAWA's founder was Meena who formed this group at a young age in 1977, with the help of

some other female university students in Kabul. Meena was assassinated in Quetta, Pakistan in 1987 by agents of KHAD (Afghanistan branch of KGB) with the help of the bloodthirsty fundamentalist gang of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. She was only 30-years-old. What distinguishes RAWA from other associations is the fact that we are a political organization. When RAWA was found, Afghanistan was under the oppression of the USSR puppet government and later Russian invasion, and Meena felt that the struggle for independence, freedom, and justice was inseparable from the struggle for women's rights. After Meena's martyrdom, RAWA continued fighting against the Afghan Islamic fundamentalists and their international backers till today.



RAWA still work underground in most parts of Afghanistan but faces enormous difficulties. The Jehadi leaders, warlords with bloody pasts of horrific crimes, are in control of the current government and parliament, and have their separate kingdoms in different parts of Afghanistan. Abdullah Abdullah, the CEO of Afghanistan, is one of these Jehadi leaders who belongs to the criminal gang of Shorae Nizar. This creates a dangerous situation for us as these thugs our biggest enemies who do not hesitate in hindering our work and harming us. In other parts of Afghanistan where the Taliban fundamentalists are in control, RAWA faces the same oppression. All our members use pseudonyms for protection and we can never go public with our work. Despite these obstacles, it is still possible for us to continue our political activities in most parts of the country due to our contact with locals and the fact that their hatred for these criminals translates into support for us.

Our political activities include publishing our magazines and articles, and mobilizing women to get this consciousness and join our struggle. We collect and document the killings, raping, pillage, extortion, and other crimes of these warlords in remote parts of Afghanistan. Our social activities are providing education to women (not just literacy classes but social and political awareness as to their rights and how to achieve them), emergency aid, making orphanages, and health-related activities.

How is Afghanistan more than 14 years after the US invasion?

The US has committed heinous crimes in Afghanistan in the past decade, killing thousands of

innocent people in airstrikes and night raids, and torturing innocent Afghans in their black sites inside their bases. The Bala Baluk massacre in Farah province in 2009 that killed 147 innocent Afghans, the Panjwai massacre in Kandahar province in 2012 that killed 16 innocent Afghans, the killing of twelve innocent children in Kunar province in 2013, and the MSF hospital strike of 2015 in Kunduz province that killed 42 and injured more than 30, are only a few incidents of the bloodshed caused by US/NATO forces in Afghanistan.



Despite this, the biggest treason the US has committed in Afghanistan is the re-installment of Islamic fundamentalist criminals in power. As history has always shown and the present proves, no foreign intervention or occupation is entirely successful without the cooperation of a group of treacherous domestic mercenaries of the occupant country. Today Afghanistan is ruled by bloodthirsty fundamentalist warlords and criminals who share the Taliban's ideology and have committed crimes worse than that of the Taliban in the past. The Northern Alliance, composed of the most traitorous and misogynist elements of warlords and military commanders were imposed on our people through three historically fraudulent elections. These criminals led the civil war of 1992-1996 that killed more than 65,000 civilians in Kabul alone and plundered the city. Their militias committed systematic murder, rape, gang-rape, extortion, robbery, arbitrary detention, cut off women's breasts, nailed nails into skulls, performed horrible killing rituals, and hundreds of other crimes. Instead of facing prosecution in international courts for these crimes, these killers enjoy full impunity and fatten their bank accounts with the West's support. Countless reports by international bodies such as the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented the crimes committed by powerful warlords all over Afghanistan, both in the past and present. Despite this, we know that this support is unwavering and will continue for decades.

The new government of Afghanistan called the 'National Unity Government' is headed by long-time US mercenary Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah of Northern Alliance, who were united by a John Kerry brokered agreement after the two could not agree on the results of the rigged and disgusting presidential elections which was full of fraud (the result of this election was officially released a year later!). Ashraf Ghani's deputies were prominent criminals Rashid Dostum and

Sarwar Danish, while Abdullah's running mates were Mohammad Khan and Mohammad Mohaqiq, another two famous criminals. The first thing the new government did was sign the Bilateral Security Agreement that legitimized the long-term presence of the US in our homeland and was the document that officially sold our independence to the US. There is no new face in the government. The only difference is that this time, the famous criminals of Khalq and Parcham faction who were the puppets of the USSR have also been given a chunk of the power, despite being implicated in a Death List which revealed the names of 5000 political activists and intellectuals who were killed by the regime in the 1970s and 80s. Needless to say, such a puppet regime cannot bring peace, freedom, democracy, justice, and women's rights even if they go through elections a hundred times.

According to the UN, the Taliban's reach is widest now since 2001. The suicide attacks by the Taliban, and the constant war between the Afghan government and Taliban has made life hell for our people. The civilian death rate for 2015 has been the highest ever recorded and a large portion of that is made up of women and children. While the wounds the Taliban gave our people are still bleeding, peace talks are ongoing to include the Taliban in the government. Instead of putting them on trial for their heinous crimes they are being invited to the government to complete the circle of fundamentalist, mercenary criminals in Afghanistan. How can such a criminal force bring peace by taking power?

Today Afghanistan's economy is in shambles. More than 60 billion dollars was donated to Afghanistan for the so-called reconstruction effort but not even cents reached our people and filled the pockets of mafia in and out of the government. In the past thirteen years not one project has contributed to rebuilding the base of the country. No basic infrastructure has been built in the country and unemployment hits new peaks every day.

Poverty and hunger in Afghanistan is among the highest in the world, comparable only to African nations. Afghanistan has the highest infant mortality rate in the world, millions suffer from hunger and malnourishment. 25% of the children in Afghanistan are engaged in labor to feed their families, which deprives them of school and other basic rights.

Afghanistan has been named the most corrupt country in the world for the past few years. Thanks to the US invasion, Afghanistan is a narco-state today. It is not just the top producer of drugs providing 90% of the world's opium, but also has the highest user of drugs too with around 3 million addicts. In the recent London conference, Ashraf Ghani stated that of the 500 billion USD income of drugs in Afghanistan, 480 billion has flowed back to Europe. This not only highlights the failure of the West in its so-called war on drugs in Afghanistan, but raises doubts of their involvement in this business.

Regarding women of Afghanistan, whom Washington promised to liberate, what is their situation today?

The Afghan women's dire situation under the medieval-minded Taliban was exploited by the US as one of the main reasons to invade Afghanistan in 2001. Let us look at how this "liberation"

has panned out.



Like all the people of Afghanistan, women are crushed between several forces in a continuous war and insecurity that has plagued our country for more than a decade: the US and its allies, Jehadi and Taliban fundamentalists, and now the newly-emerged ISIS.

The parliament has attempted to legalize stoning to death for adultery, wife-beating, and honor killing. Most of the women in Afghan jails today were sentenced by the misogynist judiciary for “moral crimes” such as running away from home from cruel husbands and in-laws, eloping with a lover, etc. Countless cases of public lashing and executions have been carried out by mock courts of Taliban, and local warlords and Mullahs in all parts of Afghanistan.

The situation of women today is catastrophic. Violence against women has risen to unprecedented levels today. Women suffer from domestic violence, rape, gang-rape, sexual abuse, murder, immolation, honor-killing, underage and coerced marriage to men much older than them, exchange of girls in marriage for items, and tens of other such misfortunes. Young girls have been tortured in basements, have had their noses, lips, and ears chopped off, deprived of food, and beaten to death by their families or in-laws. What we hear in the media is only the tip of the iceberg.

In 2001, the US and its allies used the plight of Afghan women as an excuse to occupy Afghanistan, they specially used the image of an Afghan woman called Zarmina who was publicly killed by Taliban in the Kabul sports stadium. But just few weeks ago the same public execution of an Afghan woman was released but the Western media turned a blind eye on it and they even did not report it.

The rates of self-immolation have reached new heights. Many women burn themselves alive as they see no other solution to their problems. The legislators, judiciary, and police all over Afghanistan are misogynist fundamentalists who impose their anti-women mentalities in the

form of laws, and offer full impunity to the perpetrators of these horrendous crimes. It is only natural that in such a situation, violence against women will only continue to rise.

Last year, Afghanistan witnessed the most horrific crime ever committed against an Afghan woman in broad daylight in central Kabul, under the nose of the local policemen and government. Farkhunda, a 26-year-old student, was lynched by a mob of thugs who falsely accused her of burning the Quran. She was kicked, punched, run over by a car, stoned, then burned and thrown in the dry Kabul river. Most of Farkhunda's killers were released days after their arrest. Out of the four remaining, one was sentenced to just 10 years in prison and the other three to 20 years. Their death penalties were overturned in what were ridiculously brief court sessions.

Later that year, 19-year-old Rukhshana was stoned to death by a Taliban kangaroo court in a Mullah-dominated western province of Afghanistan for eloping. Her screams echoed around the country as she was slowly murdered by an angry crowd of Taliban. A delegation was sent by Ashraf Ghani, the Afghan president, to investigate and punish the perpetrators of the crimes. The delegation was headed by a Mullah who backed the Taliban and openly championed the stoning of the young girl as being Islamic and legal a few days after the incident. The investigation was unsurprisingly futile.

Perhaps the clearest reflection of the mindset of the current legislature came from Nazir Ahmad Hanafi, a prominent Afghan legislator, whose heated interview with Isobel Yeung culminated in a blatant threat: "Maybe I should give you to an Afghan man to take your nose off", a reference to the mutilation of a 20-year-old Reza Gul, whose husband chopped her nose off for the "moral crime" of running away from her home.

Afghanistan still has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, with thousands of women dying during childbirth every year. The official literacy rate stands at 18% although considering the ground reality the rate is much lower than this. Afghanistan is rightfully called one of the worst places to be a woman.

The US has made a joke out of democracy and women's rights in our country by supporting the most misogynist criminals in the government, but shamelessly using the symbolic presence of female officials to deceive the world about the actual situation. Most of these women are tied to the same fundamentalist parties and criminals, and are as undemocratic and misogynist, as their male counterparts. The others are simply using this opportunity to stuff their bank accounts from the gold rush of foreign aid. The other achievements of women such as reopening of schools and jobs for women are limited to a few urban cities of Afghanistan, with majority women still suffering in the current hellfire.

Right now the Afghan puppet government is negotiating with Gulbuddin and want to take off his name from black list of the UN and give him legal protection and impunity. But this is the most notorious Afghan warlord and enemy of women's rights who used to throw acid on the faces of women who were seen in public.

The US uses these superficial ‘gains’ as pretext to continue its military occupation of Afghanistan, threatening that they will be lost after its so-called withdrawal. It is a basic truth that hard-fought gains made by the true struggle of women are never lost, and the US uses these cosmetic changes as a smokescreen to justify its invasion to the people of the world.

How do the Afghan people in general see the US “long stay” (occupation) in Afghanistan?

Afghans are fed-up, they know that the West has betrayed them, they came with long claims of “human rights”, “women’s rights” and “democracy”, but in fact they pushed Afghanistan towards disasters and mafia state and everything they did were just cosmetic changes. They are fed-up with the crimes and brutalizes of the US forces in Afghanistan over the past 15 years because tens of thousands of Afghan were killed by their bombs and shootings but in fact terrorism was nourished more than before. They are fed-up that the West is relying on the most brutal and inhuman bands and in the name of “war on terror” actually supports terrorists and use terrorism as a weapon to defeat its rivals like Russia and China.

Why do you think the US is so interested in your country?

At this point, after more than a decade of US aggression in several countries in the region, we think there remains no doubt in anybody’s mind that the US is present in our country and other countries for its own interests. The geopolitical position of Afghanistan offers the US a one-of-a-kind advantage in the region: access to its biggest rivals in the world, Russia, China, India, and Iran. The US has built gigantic military bases and its second largest embassy in the world, and has thousands of military personnel and private contractors stationed in different parts of Afghanistan. This military set up points to the US’s attempt to keep its adversaries under its thumb, and continue pursuing its bigger aims in the region. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the treacherous, fundamentalist-ridden government of Afghanistan, coupled with a worn-out, war riddled population that has been suppressed for four decades and is too tired to fight back, provides the optimum conditions for the US’s operations here. The traitors of the Afghan state not only sold out Afghanistan, but have kept silent about the brutal crimes of the US forces and defended all its acts of aggression in the country.

Afghans now know that the US just uses Afghanistan as its front in Asia to advance its regional agenda which is to promote terrorism to turn Asia into a burning point on the earth to stop the military and economic advancement emerging powers in this continent.

If you track every significant change in Afghanistan’s situation, such as the relocation of the Taliban – and the war, insecurity, terror, and unrest that automatically follows them – to the northern regions, they all serve a certain interest of the US. In this case it would be causing instability near, and even instigating Russia. It is important to point out here, that contrary to what is generally propagated about the Taliban being lackeys of Pakistan, and to a smaller extent, Iran, the truth is that ultimately it is the US that is holding the leash of these brutes. The Taliban are the reserve force of the US who will utilize them whenever it sees the need. It is no secret that the bloodthirsty Taliban regime was created and nurtured by the US, and will be used

whenever the need arises. The Taliban serve a dual purpose for the US today: they justify the continuation of the “war on terror”, and serve as their proxies in parts of Afghanistan that are not under the control of the so-called government. Today, nothing in Afghanistan can occur or change without the US’s permission and it would be quite naïve to think otherwise. This situation also exposes the lie the US government told the world in 2014 about ending its war in Afghanistan by withdrawing its troops and ending the Afghan war. The US continues to have a strong foothold in Afghanistan for its geostrategic purposes.