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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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Afghans protest in run-up to war anniversary

Tens years after invasion that ended Taliban rule, hundreds in Kabul say country will be safer when US forces leave.

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Afghans protesting in Kabul said they believe their country will be more peaceful when US forces leave [AFP]

Hundreds of Afghans have marched through Kabul on the eve of the 10-year anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan, condemning the US as occupiers and demanding the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops.

About 300 men and women gathered early in the morning with placards and banners accusing the US of "massacring" civilians while denouncing President Hamid Karzai as a puppet subservient to Washington.

"Occupation - atrocities - brutality," read one sign held aloft by two women.

"No to occupation" said another placard, as a US flag was set on fire. Another banner featured a caricature of Karzai as a glove puppet holding a pen and signing a document entitled "promises to the USA".

The rally, near a shrine and river in downtown Kabul, lasted around three hours, and ended peacefully.

Karzai became Afghanistan's leader in June 2002, seven months after Northern Alliance forces supported by the US entered Kabul and drove the Taliban regime from power. Karzai won subsequent elections in 2005 and 2009, though they were marred by fraud.

One picture that featured prominently in the rally was that of a US soldier, Andrew Holmes, posing with the corpse of an unarmed teenage Afghan villager who he had gunned down. He was sentenced to seven years in prison for the 2010 murder.

This year has seen record levels of civilian casualties and although about 80 per cent were caused by anti-government fighters, killings by foreign forces tend to spark more vocal public anger.

The US, with the most forces in Afghanistan, bears the brunt of the criticism.