

IRISH ANTI WAR MOVEMENT

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US BOMBING OF AFGHANI AND PAKISTANI CIVILIANS

The Irish Anti War Movement will hold a protest picket at Dáil Eireann this Wednesday 13 May at 12.30pm.

The Irish Anti-War Movement condemns the recent US bombing in Afghanistan that may have killed as many as 147 Afghans, including many women and children. If the reports of over 100 dead are true it will make it the most deadly incident involving civilians since foreign troops invaded Afghanistan in 2001. This one act of terror equivocates to over five Omagh bombings, which puts Hilary Clinton's casual apology into stark perspective.

The Irish Anti-War Movement also condemns the US bombings of innocent civilians in Pakistan over the last few months, almost all killed by predator drone planes. A recent investigation found that in the last three years, US predator drone strikes have killed 701 people in Pakistan, among which 687 were innocent civilians. The Pakistan Military, under clear duress from the US Government, has now broken the peace agreement with the Taliban leadership in the tribal regions and has instigated a full-scale offensive in the Swat Valley which will lead to huge suffering for the civilian population there. UNHCR is estimating that there may be as many as one million refugees.

This escalation of the phony US led 'war on terror' into Pakistan will do nothing to bring peace to this turbulent region or the wider world. Barack Obama's disappointing approach is to send 21,000 more troops to Afghanistan, a move opposed by a clear majority of Afghans. He is also enlarging the theatre of war into Pakistan in a misguided effort to control Afghanistan. This will be disastrous for the region. The continuation of this war, and particularly terrorist acts against civilians, will only lead to huge suffering for civilians and the further radicalisation of the local population.

The IAWM does not support the Taliban's ideology, military strategy or its strict laws on social behaviour. However, we recognise that it is US foreign policy that has led to the invasion of Afghanistan and the killing and displacement of thousands of civilians. The continued occupation

and the escalation of the war is the real barrier to a just and lasting peace for the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan. After all there is a direct line between the Mujahedin who fought the invading Soviet Army in 1979 and the current Taliban insurgents. During the 1980s, through the American Government's funding of the Mujahedin, together with their use of the Pakistani secret service, these insurgents became the forces of Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

Ireland is directly implicated in this unjustified occupation and escalation of the war in Afghanistan, since it has deployed seven officers there, under NATO command. The Irish Anti-War Movement calls on the Irish government to use its influence on the United States Government to:

- stop the killings of innocent civilians
- to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, and
- to change its foreign policy to prioritise peace and justice in the region instead of war and terror.

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