

MAWO STATEMENT ON THE

Harper Government's

"Independent Advisory Panel on

AFGHANISTAN"

October 2007

(Exerpt from original statement)

Stephen Harper's October 12th announcement of the newly appointed "Independent Advisory Panel on Afghanistan" marked the latest government manoeuvre to try to delay and mask the deepening crisis that the occupation of Afghanistan poses for the government of Canada. The creation of this 'independent' and 'non-partisan' panel attempts to sideline any public or parliamentary debate on the occupation of Afghanistan until the panel has delivered its report by the end of January 2008. Unable to deal with the widening rift in the ruling class on how to remedy the crisis, the government of Canada is using this as an attempt to determine some way Canada can still secure its economic and political interests through this war and occupation.

The "independent" panel is chaired by John Manley, a member of the Liberal Party and a former Foreign Affairs minister and former Deputy Prime Minister. Manley was minister of Foreign Affairs in October 2001 when Canada supported and participated in the US-led invasion of Afghanistan. The other members of the panel are five ruling class advisors with career histories in federal government politics with the Conservative or Liberal parties, the department foreign affairs, or as CEOs and top executives of major Canadian corporations.

In six years, the NATO/Canada occupation has lowered life expectancy by 4.5 years, killed tens of thousands of Afghan people, raised the suicide rate of women, and destroyed hospitals, schools, and other infrastructure. Daily criticism of this failure from the media and other elements of the ruling class are heaping pressure on the Conservative government. This "advisory panel" is their desperate response to diffuse the pressure that comes from their failure.

John Manley himself said "Canada's future in Afghanistan really transcends partisan politics", and this is very true. For all sections of the ruling class of Canada, whether they're grouped into different political parties or not, the occupation



Demonstration in support of ousted Afghan MP, Malalai Joya, March 30, 2007.

of Afghanistan is key to rescuing the status quo political, social and economic system in Canada from economic crisis. The recommendations from this panel will not fundamentally change anything about the occupation, nor will they represent the interests of regular Afghan people or working, poor people in Canada. This panel is nothing but a ruling class advisory to deal with a ruling class crisis. If it is "independent", it is indeed independent from the working and oppressed masses of Canada and therefore people in Canada shouldn't be tricked by this ruling class maneuvering.

Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) strongly condemns and opposes the formation of this panel which only serves as another way to continue Canada's occupation of Afghanistan. As an antiwar coalition in Vancouver, BC Canada, MAWO continues to call for an independent and public inquiry into Canada's war drive in Afghanistan. The call is for an inquiry that will be 100% independent of the war-making government of Canada and its political parties, not hand-chosen by Harper. People in Canada do have a right to know how and why the decisions were made to occupy Afghanistan, expand and extend the operation, and more than double the military budget without any say from people in Canada at all. More than 13,000 people in the Lower Mainland have signed the MAWO petition demanding "Canada Out of Afghanistan Now!" in a show of just what regular people think about this occupation. We demand:

Canada/NATO Out of Afghanistan Now!

Independent Public Inquiry Now!

LIFT THE 2-YEAR BAN FROM CANADA

AGAINST ALISON BODINE!

— 10,000 Petition Campaign —

On September 13, 2007, Alison Bodine, co-chair and spokesperson of Vancouver-based Mobilization Against War & Occupation, well-known social justice activist and a US citizen was arrested by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) on her way from Canada to the United States. Three days prior, on Monday Sept 10th, Alison was harassed by CBSA officials while traveling from the US into Canada after border officials searched her vehicle, which contained various political materials and progressive newspapers. At that time, she was asked to voluntarily return to the United States, which she did.

Hours later Alison returned to the border without any of the political materials and was allowed into Canada. Alison's friend then attempted to enter Canada with the political materials, which she had transferred to him to avoid harassment. He was detained and questioned about the materials and they were seized from him by Canadian Customs.

On Thursday Sept 13th on her way back to US, Alison attempted to claim the political materials that the CBSA had seized. At the border she was handcuffed and told she was under arrest, and that a warrant had been issued for her arrest in Canada. She was initially detained with no information given about the basis for her arrest, or the charges that she was facing.

This unjust and illegal imprisonment was met with a strong protest, and the Alison Bodine Defence Committee was formed. On Friday afternoon, 80 people came together on just five hours notice at the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) offices in Vancouver, demanding Alison's immediate release. Meanwhile Alison's case was soon picked up and covered locally and nationally by newspapers, TV and radio.

At 8:00pm on Friday, Alison was given notice by immigration officials that she would be released from custody immediately until her admissibility hearing on Monday Sept 17th – a partial victory in the campaign for her freedom!

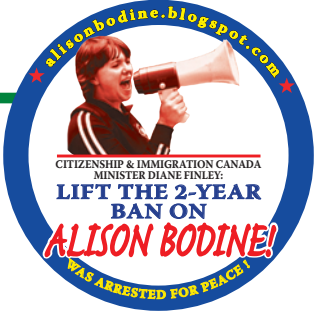
When she presented herself at the CIC offices the next day, she was informed that her hearing had been postponed until Sept. 28th. The CBSA postponement of Alison's hearing was a maneuver to delay because they knew they wouldn't be able to prove the charges they had made up so far. In just one week, the ABDC collected over 1,000 signatures (By Oct 31, there were more than 3000) on a petition demanding "Drop all Charges Against Alison Bodine Now!". Letters of support have come in from concerned organizations and individuals around the world. These include letters from NDP MPs Libby Davies and Bill Siksay, MLAs such as Raj Chouhan, David Chudnovsky, Alex Atamanenko, the 55,000-member Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and Iglesia San Romero de las Americas church in New York City.

On October 11th Alison Bodine got another delay. On this day on her admissibility hearing adjudicator because of the weakness of the CBSA's case, announced that the final decision would not be released until October 31 at 1pm.

On October 31st, the Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) ordered US-born antiwar activist in Canada, Alison Bodine to be banned from Canada for 2 years. The October 31st decision ordered her to leave Canada by November 17th.

By the end of the day Oct 31st, the story of the antiwar activist banned from entry for two years by Canada border officials had already been published by the Canadian Press news agency and picked up by newspapers coast-to-coast in Canada. By Nov 1st, the story went worldwide through the AP-Associated Press, a newswire serving 121 countries around the world and the MSNBC newswire, one of the largest online news providers in the US.

The IRB decision and ban attempts to keep Alison from traveling to Canada to work with antiwar organizers here in Canada, much like when two CODEPink Women for Peace organizers who were denied entry to Canada two separate times in October 2007. The



women were coming to Canada to participate in antiwar speaking events and meetings. The CBSA is partaking in the attempt by the governments of Canada and the US to keep antiwar organizers from both sides of the border from uniting and working together to make the US and Canada antiwar movements stronger. The difference in the cases is that Alison Bodine is a US citizen, who is active in the antiwar movement in Canada. Alison was a student at UBC for four years, and she served as President of the AMS Coalition Against War on the People of Iraq and Internationally (CAWOPI) and on the executive committee of the UBC Social Justice Centre.

The unjust arrest, detention and exclusion of Alison Bodine means the Government of Canada and its agencies want to continue and escalate the silencing of free speech, freedom of political expression and targeting people who oppose their policies at home and abroad and their new era of war and occupation. They are also testing and evaluating our response to defend ourselves against their attacks against us. The degree, seriousness, effectiveness and consistency of our defence impacts their decision on how to further their repressive measures.

The Alison Bodine Defence Committee (ABDC) is exploring and pursuing all possible legal avenues including the steps to secure a federal appeal, while continuing the political campaign against this attack. The Federal Citizenship and Immigration Minister, Diane Finley, has the power to overturn the ban at any point. The ABDC has launched a new drive for 10,000 signatures on a petition demanding that the 2-year ban against Alison be lifted. To download the petition or for more updates on the campaign, go to: <http://alisonbodine.blogspot.com>.

HANDS OFF IRAN!

U.S. Escalates War Drive Against Iran

On October 25th, the US escalated its drive for war and invasion against the people of Iran with the announcement of new sanctions attacking the Iranian Defence Ministry, Revolutionary Guards, and major Iranian banks. The US state and treasury departments also labelled the Revolutionary Guard Corps "proliferators of weapons of mass destruction" and "a supporter of terrorism".

Since October 2006, the US has been carrying out a massive military buildup in the Persian Gulf. The new sanctions and condemnation by the US government are a continuation of this build up through political and economic attack. The US government has taken this campaign even further with designating an internal and official army of another country, Iran, as a 'terrorist' force.

Already, major banks in several European countries have joined the US attempt to hold Iranian people hostage by withdrawing from any financial transactions and business with the Iranian banks. The sanctions seek to cripple the Iranian economy, armed forces and defences in order to weaken the country in preparation for the attack against Iran that the US desires. All



evidence indicates that the US is marching to war for broad military aggression against the people of Iran.

This war drive is part of a bloodthirsty effort to consolidate this era of war and occupation and to re-establish US hegemony over the Middle East. The US has been trying to recover from the huge blow they suffered during the 1979 Iranian Revolution, when their puppet regime of the Shah was ousted by the Iranian people. Any foreign attack against Iran will bring a huge loss of life, destruction and terror for the people

of Iran –the same disaster and chaos brought to Afghanistan and Iraq- and must be opposed by all peace-loving people around the world! The self-determination of the Iranian people must be defended under any circumstance.

In the case that the US attacks on Iran, come to the US consulate on the day of attack at 4pm and for the next day at the same time. For more information contact:

Iranian Committee Against War
iraniancommitteeagainstarwar@yahoo.ca
or 604-771-7290.

Mobilization Against War
★ Occupation [MAWO]
ANTIWAR FILM FESTIVAL
DEC.15th The New era of War + Occupation | 10am - 930pm
DEC.16th A New World is Possible: Films From Cuba & Latin America | 10am - 9pm

the battle of Ideas

5th Annual MAWO Antiwar Film Festival
Saturday & Sunday December 15th - 16th 07
FREE
@ Commercial Dr.
Britannia Community Center 1661 Napier St.

INFO@MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG | 6043221764
WWW.MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG

Organized in Partnership with the Britannia Community Services Centre

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www.mawovancouver.org

US/UK Occupation of Iraq: Collapse of Environment & Elimination of Security

According to the ORB, a British polling agency, over 1.2 million Iraqi civilians have been killed since the occupation of Iraq began in March 2003. In fact more than 1 in 5 households nationwide have suffered at least one death.

What accompanies this outright violence is something just as shocking – the short-term and long-term environmental catastrophes created by this brutality. Access to water, the destruction of sewage systems, poisoning of agricultural soils and implosion of agricultural production, and depleted uranium poisoning – all these threaten and in huge amount have already destroyed the livelihoods of Iraqis for generation to come.

Iraq is home to the oldest agricultural traditions in the world and was once self-sufficient in agriculture. How do we explain the present day situation then?

According to Global Research Institute, an upcoming Iraqi study found that over 75 percent of the vegetables and fruit consumed in Iraq are now imported from Syria, Jordan and Iran. Drainage systems depend on pumping machines that have come to a nearly complete stop because of electricity and fuel shortages. Soil is now corrupted from neglect.

The vast majority of Iraqis live by two substantial rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. But today, about 70 percent of Iraqis have no access to safe drinking water, and only 19 percent have sewage access, according to the UN's World Health Organisation (WHO).

The present situation in Iraq could be understood from Jabbar Ahmed, Iraqi farmer who in an interview said, “*This gift from God*

is not used properly by the authorities because of the UN sanctions and then the chaos that followed U.S. occupation of the country.”

Under US/UK occupation, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has stated that Iraqi water problems “multiplied” since 2003. WHO also stated that Iraqis have now been hit by an outbreak of cholera from unsafe drinking water. WHO confirmed in September that Iraq had registered 1,500 confirmed cases of cholera this year, compared to the 30 usually registered.

Dead Land, No Security – Why are They There?

The US State Department's security chief Richard Griffin, after a widespread scandal as well as pressure from US media and civil liberty organizations, announced his resignation on October 23. He was crushed by a growing pile of security failures based on criminal activities against Iraqi people by US army and private US security forces like Blackwater.

How can anyone justify the US/UK occupation of Iraq? As the death toll rises, the water festers, the soil spoils, and the people of Iraq face degradable and torturous conditions – how is this occupation justified? Iraqis have the human resources, the natural resources, and the obvious desire to build their own lives free from foreign conquest and to live with dignity. The first step towards improving Iraqis' situation is the removal of all foreign troops. Four years of misery, degradation and mass murder is enough.

**US/UK OUT OF IRAQ!
SELF-DETERMINATION FOR IRAQI PEOPLE!
OUT NOW!**

already resulting in a major humanitarian crisis. On October 20, the Shifa Hospital – Gaza's main hospital – ran out of anesthetic due to restricted medical imports, and was forced to limit its surgeries to only critical procedures. In addition, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation says that the food situation in Gaza has deteriorated considerably since September, with over 30% of children undernourished.

Israel claims that the sanctions are “necessary” and that the move to cut off power to Gaza is to deter attacks against Israel by Palestinian resistance fighters. But on September 26, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak announced that Israel “is getting closer to carrying out a widespread operation in Gaza”. In reality, these new sanctions are a part of an attempt to crush the growing resistance in Gaza with a major military attack. In fact Israel hopes with the combination of military attack and imposing humanitarian crisis to be able to defeat Hamas government and Palestinian resistance in Gaza. This anti-human and criminal act against the people of Palestine must be condemned by all peace-loving people. Together with the people of Palestine, we must demand: Israel Hands off Gaza! Self-determination for Palestine!



HANDS OFF PALESTINE!

Israel Prepares for a Major Military Offensive in Gaza

On October 25, 2007, Israel escalated its attacks against Palestine with the announcement that it would begin cutting off electricity to 1.4 million residents of Gaza. This latest attack on the people of Palestine comes as part of an increasing campaign



by Israel and other imperialist countries to crush the anti-occupation resistance in Gaza. This campaign has escalated since the democratically-elected Hamas government came to power in 2006.

On September 19 this year, Israel declared Gaza an “enemy entity” and began tightening its control of Gaza's borders and restricting imports to Gaza in order to make life more difficult for Palestinian. Israel controls Gaza's borders, air space and coastline, and also maintains majority control of Gaza's utilities and access to humanitarian aid. These new sanctions against Palestinians in Gaza are

MAWO Newsletter #17 Created by: Nita Palmer, Thomas Davies, Ali Yerevani, Kira Koshelanyk

Get involved



with **MAWO!**

Meetings
Wednesdays - 6:30PM
For location, please visit our website:
mawovancouver.org
e. info@mawovancouver.org
p. 604-322-1764
f. 604-322-1763

Monthly Picket Action

Free the 5 Cuban Heroes Held in U.S. Jails!

**Tuesday
December 18
4pm-5pm**

U.S. Consulate (1075 W. Pender St.)

Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver
604.719.6947 | cuban5_van@yahoo.com

www.vancubasolidarity.com/freethefivevan.html



MAWO Monthly Antiwar Rally

Canada/NATO Out of Afghanistan! HANDS OFF IRAN!

**US/UK Out of Iraq!
Israel Hands off Lebanon & Gaza!
US/UN Hands off Africa!**

**Self-Determination for Indigenous Nations in Canada!
Self-Determination for All Oppressed Nations!**

RALLY at 2 PM

Saturday Jan. 26th

Vancouver Art Gallery
(Robson Street @ Howe Street)



Organized by Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO)
WWW.MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG

New Years Eve Party

49

Years of the Cuban Revolution

**Monday
Dec 31**

Welsh Hall

215 East 17th Ave @ Main

Tickets: \$5-15 Sliding Scale

8pm



Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)
The Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver
Solidarity Coalition for a United Latin America
778-882-5223

www.vancubasolidarity.com

www.mawovancouver.org