

## Afghan Message is Clear: US/CANADA/NATO OUT NOW!

If you walk down the streets of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, today, you would notice that much has changed since the 2001 US/Canada/NATO invasion and occupation of the country. There are many new things in the capital: new malls that few other than foreigners can shop in, new billboards advertising cell phones that most Afghans could never dream of owning, new flashy hotels where foreign investors and diplomats stay.

There is also new poverty. Thousands of refugees displaced by the occupation live in refugee camps on the outskirts of Kabul. Poverty has a new face, too. In addition to skyrocketing rates of opium addiction across Afghanistan that have come with the occupation, intravenous drug use has shown up for the first time, bringing with it at least hundreds, probably thousands of cases of HIV and AIDS – a disease previously unheard of in Afghanistan.

For Afghan women in particular, the situation is dire. Many who have lost husbands and sons to war are forced into prostitution in order to survive. Others must sell their children. A 2009 human rights assessment of Afghanistan by Canada's foreign affairs department noted that, "Self-immolation [committing suicide by lighting oneself on fire] is being used by increasing numbers of Afghan women to escape their dire circumstances and women constitute the majority of Afghan suicides." This has left many Afghan women wondering "is this the freedom that the West – US, Canada and NATO – were supposed to bring us?"

Moving to rural Afghanistan, where 80 percent of the population lives, the situation is also grim. Promises by the occupation forces to bring security and development have been crushed by the thousands of 500-pound bombs being dropped on Afghan villages. Wedding parties have been a favourite target of the bombers. The UN states that 2009 was the worst year for civilian casualties in Afghanistan.

Beyond the thousands of soldiers, tanks, helicopters and bombs, though, little has changed. The occupation has brought with it virtually no development beyond a few schools and clinics for show in some major population centres. The main hospital in Kandahar province, Mirwais, is severely overcrowded and without basic supplies like antiseptic and oxygen. In most rural areas, a doctor is hours or days away.

Even the simple and basic necessity of water has not been provided by the occupation forces. Three-quarters of the Afghan population is still without access to safe drinking water, despite the fact that hundreds of wells could be built for the cost of sending even one soldier to Afghanistan. Similarly, only 13% of the country has access to improved sanitation, another basic need. Adding up the destruction and broken promises of development, it is little wonder that more and more Afghans are turning against the occupation.

With Obama's announcement of the troop surge in Afghanistan came the announcement of a new focus of war against the

people of Pakistan. A major part of the aim of the troop surge was not only to stop the resistance in Afghanistan, but also to crush the growing resistance in Pakistan. Three million Afghan refugees live across the border in Pakistan, and Afghanistan and Pakistan also share a huge cultural connection through the large Pashtun population that lives on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. As the war in Afghanistan has intensified, killing more civilians and destroying more communities, resistance



**Afghans protest against the occupation after four people were killed in a NATO raid in Qara Bagh. January 21, 2010.**

to this war has grown among the Afghan refugee and Pashtun populations of Pakistan as well. In 2008, the US began attacks on this resistance movement through bombings by unmanned drone planes. These bombings have killed over 1000 Pakistani people, including many women and children. Rather than crushing the resistance in Pakistan, though, these bombings have only added fuel to the fire, as opposition grows to the US presence in Pakistan.

Canada's shameful role in the occupation of Afghanistan was recently brought into the international spotlight with the scandal of Canada's involvement in torturing Afghan detainees. In November 2009, Canadian diplomat Richard Colvin brought testimony before Parliament that he became aware in 2006 while serving in Afghanistan that all Afghans captured by Canadian Forces and turned over to Afghan authorities faced torture. Mr. Colvin testified that many of these people were innocent, and noted that Canadian Forces took in six times as many prisoners as British troops, also serving in Afghanistan with a larger force. "[The detainees] were picked up... during routine military operation, and on the basis typically not of intelligence [reports] but suspicion or unproven denunciation... Many were just local people: farmers, truck drivers, tailors, peasants – random human beings in the wrong place at the wrong time," Colvin testified. Many of these detainees have simply 'disappeared', and although there are no official records, it is likely the worst has happened to them.

Mr. Colvin's repeated reports to over 70 various government and military officials were ignored, and it was not until October 2007, after coming under fire from various human rights organizations, that action was taken to stop this – sending one monitor to overlook the transfer of detainees.

This torture scandal, which has shocked many, has revealed the true face of Canada's mission in Afghanistan. The exactly who was involved in the torture is not the question of importance here. By occupying the country and capturing detainees, Canada's occupation forces were providing the situation but letting others do their dirty work. Opposition parties in Canada's parliament have called for a public inquiry into the alleged torture. What we need is not just a government-sanctioned public inquiry into this situation, but an *independent* public inquiry into Canada's involvement in Afghanistan as a whole. Working people in Canada have a right to know why thousands of troops, thousands of lives and billions of taxpayer

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## We are Sending Doctors, Not Soldiers

### Reflection by Fidel Castro

IN my "Reflection" of January 14, two days after the disaster in Haiti that destroyed that neighboring sister nation, I wrote: "In the field of healthcare and other areas, Cuba – despite being a poor and blockaded country – has been cooperating with the Haitian people for many years. Around 400 doctors and healthcare experts are offering their services free of charge to the Haitian people. Our doctors are working every day in 227 of the country's 337 communes. On the other hand, at least 400 young Haitians have trained as doctors in our homeland. They will now be working with the reinforcement brigade which traveled there yesterday to save lives in this critical situation. Thus, without any special effort being made, up to 1,000 doctors and healthcare experts can be mobilized, almost all of whom are already there and willing to cooperate with any other state that wishes to save the lives of the Haitian people and rehabilitate the injured."

"The head of our medical brigade reported: 'The situation is difficult, but we have already started saving lives.'"

Hour after hour, day and night, Cuban healthcare professionals began working nonstop in the few facilities left standing, in tents, parks or other open spaces, given that the population feared further aftershocks.

The situation was far more serious than was originally thought. Tens of thousands of injured people were clamoring for help on the streets of Port-au-Prince, and an incalculable number of people lay, dead or alive, beneath the rubble of clay and adobe with which the homes of the vast majority of the population were constructed. Even the most solid buildings collapsed. It was also necessary to locate the Haitian doctors who had graduated from the Latin American School of Medicine in the midst of destroyed neighborhoods, many of whom were affected, either directly or indirectly, by the tragedy.

United Nations officials were trapped inside their buildings and dozens of lives were lost, including those of several high-ranking officials of MINUSTAH – a United Nations contingent – and the fate of hundreds of other members of its personnel was unknown.

Haiti's presidential palace collapsed. Many public buildings, including several hospitals, were left in ruins.

The disaster has shocked the world. People have been able to follow the situation via footage broadcast by the principal international TV channels. Governments from around the world announced the dispatch of rescue teams, food, medicines, equipment and other resources.

In accordance with the position publicly stated by Cuba, medical personnel from other nations – including Spain, Mexico and Colombia, among others – worked very hard alongside our doctors in facilities that they themselves had improvised. Organizations such as the PAHO, friendly countries such as Venezuela, and other nations supplied medicines and other resources. A total absence of egotism and chauvinism characterized the impeccable behavior of the Cuban professionals and their leaders.

As it has done in similar situations – like when Hurricane Katrina caused massive devastation in the city of New Orleans and placed the lives of thousands of U.S. citizens in danger – Cuba offered to send a full medical brigade to cooperate with the people of the United States, a country that,

as is well-known, possesses vast resources but, at that moment, needed doctors trained and equipped to save lives. Because of its geographical location, the 1,000-plus doctors from the "Henry Reeve" Brigade were mobilized, with the necessary medicines and equipment, to leave at once for that U.S. city. It never crossed our minds that the president of that nation would reject the offer and allow a number of Americans who could have been saved to lose their lives. The error of that government was perhaps its inability to understand that the people of Cuba do not see the U.S. people as an enemy; nor do they blame them for the aggression our homeland has suffered.



**Cuban and Cuban-trained doctors staff the OFATMA Social Security Hospital in Port-au-Prince after the earthquake.**

Neither was that government capable of understanding that our country does not need to beg favors or pardons from those who, for half a century, have tried in vain to bring us to our knees.

Likewise in the case of Haiti, our country immediately responded to applications from the United States authorities to fly over eastern Cuba and other facilities that they needed to provide assistance as swiftly as possible to U.S. and Haitian citizens affected by the earthquake.

These practices have characterized the ethical conduct of our people and, together with their equanimity and determination, have been the constant features of our foreign policy. All those who have been our adversaries in the international arena know that only too well.

Cuba will firmly defend the opinion that the tragedy that has taken place in Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere, represents a challenge for the richest and most powerful countries in the international community.

Haiti is a net product of the colonial, capitalist and imperialist system imposed on the world. Both slavery in Haiti and its subsequent poverty were imposed from abroad. The terrible earthquake came in the wake of the Copenhagen Summit, where the most elemental rights of the 192 member states of the United Nations were trampled over.

In the aftermath of the tragedy, a competition is underway in Haiti for the pre-emptive and illegal adoption of boys and girls, which has obliged UNICEF to adopt preventative measures against the uprooting of a large number of children, thus depriving close relatives of such rights.

The number of fatalities is already in excess of 100,000. An elevated number of citizens have lost arms or legs, or have suffered fractures that will require rehabilitation for them to work or manage their lives independently.

Around 80% of the country will have to be rebuilt and a sufficiently-developed economy needs to be created in order to satisfy needs according to its productive capacity. The reconstruction of Europe or Japan on the basis of their productive capacity and the technical level of their populations, was a relatively simple task in comparison to the efforts that will have to be made in Haiti. There, as well as a large part of Africa and other areas of the Third World, it is essential to create the conditions for sustainable development. In only 40 years' time, humanity will be comprised of more than nine billion inhabitants and will have to confront the

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# U.S. ANTIWAR MOVEMENT GEARS UP FOR MARCH 20

March 20, 2010 will mark the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. On this day people from all over the US will come out into the street as part of country-wide co-ordinated actions in Washington DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and other cities. Major demands of the rallies will be: “US Out of Iraq and Afghanistan Now!” “Free Palestine!” “Reparations for Haiti!” “Money for health-care, jobs and education!”

In order to build for a united and powerful day of action, coalitions between antiwar and social justice organizations and individuals have formed. The March 20<sup>th</sup> Coalition Planning Committee met in Washington DC with representatives from the Alliance for Global Justice, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), International ANSWER, the National Council of Arab Americans, the Muslim American Society Freedom and the National lawyer’s Guild, among others. To date, there are over 700 endorsers of the March 20<sup>th</sup> action, including US Labor Against War, peace activist Cindy Sheehan, Medea Benjamin, co-founder of CODEPINK and Mike Ferner, President of Veterans for Peace. In Vancouver, BC, Mobilization Against War and Occupation



Protest against Iraq war in Hollywood, California.

(MAWO) has endorsed the action and will be participating. Leading up to March 20<sup>th</sup> many of these groups and individuals are working to do outreach and education in their own communities, including forums and teach-ins.

Under the Obama administration military spending in the US has increased to the largest military budget in history – \$680 billion dollars with even more requested. This is money not spent on health-care, education and jobs for poor, working and oppressed people in US. In the last year, the number of US troops in Afghanistan has more than doubled, along with continuation of the brutal occupation of Iraq as well as the US government’s policies on torture. As over 11,000 US military troops move into Haiti, and the same bombs fall and bullets fire at people from Palestine to Pakistan to Yemen and Somalia, March 20, 2010 is an important day to unite in the streets to demand: All Troops Home NOW!

For more information visit [www.March20.org](http://www.March20.org) & [www.mawovancouver.org](http://www.mawovancouver.org) in Vancouver, BC.

## Fidel: We Send Doctors, Not Soldiers

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challenge of climate change, which scientists accept as an inevitable reality.

In the midst of the Haitian tragedy, without anyone knowing how and why, thousands of U.S. marines, 82nd Airborne Division troops and other military forces have occupied Haitian territory. Worse still, neither the United Nations nor the U.S. government has offered any explanation to the world regarding this deployment of forces.

Various governments have complained that their aircraft have not been able to land and deliver the human and technical resources that have been sent to Haiti.

For their part, a number of countries are announcing the additional dispatch of soldiers and military equipment. From my point of view, such actions would contribute to creating chaos and complicating international cooperation, which, in itself, is complex. It is vital to seriously discuss this issue and entrust the UN with the leading role that corresponds to it in this delicate matter.

Our country is fulfilling a strictly humanitarian mission. To the extent of its possibili-

ties, it will contribute the human and material resources at its disposal. The will of our people, proud their doctors and cooperative workers on vital services, is great and will rise to the occasion.

Any significant cooperation offered to our country will not be rejected, but its acceptance will be entirely subordinated to the importance and significance of the assistance required of the human resources of our homeland.

It is only fair to confirm that, to date, our modest aircraft and the important human resources that Cuba has placed at the disposal of the Haitian people have arrived at their destination without any difficulty whatsoever.

We are sending doctors, not soldiers!

Fidel Castro Ruz  
January 23, 2010  
5:30 p.m.

## Afghan Message is Clear

continued from front

dollars have been poured into the mission in Afghanistan without public consultation or debate. We must also demand an end to Canada’s involvement in the occupation of Afghanistan – now. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper claims that Canadian soldiers will be pulled out of Afghanistan in December 2011. Whether this happens remains to be seen, since the mission in Afghanistan has already been extended three times. But even if Canada’s official military presence in Afghanistan ends in 2011, even Harper acknowledges there will still be a significant Canadian military presence in Afghanistan in other forms. For our Afghan brothers and sisters who have suffered for now nearly a decade at the hands of US, Canada and NATO troops, a partial troop withdrawal does not equal an end to the occupation. We must follow the clear message of the Afghan people and demand:

**Canada/US/NATO Out of Afghanistan Now!**  
**Self-determination for Afghanistan Now!**

MAWO Newsletter #25 Created by:  
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## Why the Antiwar Movement Must Include the Case of the Cuban 5 as an Important Campaign

These five men have been locked up in U.S. prison for over 11 years. The Cuban Five are Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Schwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez and Fernando González Llort. They are sons, husbands, brothers, poets, pilots, college graduates and artists. Three of the Cuban Five were born in Cuba and two were born in the United States. Also three of them fought in Angola, during the war against apartheid.

They are currently serving long prison sentences in the United States, while admitted anti-Cuban terrorist Luis Posada Carriles walks free under US government protection.

The Five Cuban Heroes are part of the U.S. government’s 50 year war against Cuba which aims to overthrow the country’s revolutionary government. All together since the Cuban revolution of 1959, terrorist attacks have killed 3,478 innocent people. These terrorists are in the USA and have enjoyed the protection and direct or indirect support of the United States government. Some of these terrorists, including Luis Posada Carriles, were responsible for planning a bombing of a Cuban airliner in 1976 which killed 73 people. Many were also active in the CIA.

In the mid 1990’s, Cuba sent five unarmed, peaceful men to Miami with the aim of infiltrating and investigating these terrorist groups. The information they collected was given to the US government in hopes they would intervene to stop the terror against Cuba.

In September 1998, after the United States government had received the findings of the five Cuban men, they were immediately arrested by the US government and put in solitary confinement for over 17 months without trial. After three years of waiting, they were finally granted a trial in 2001.

The trial was held in Miami, which was protested by the five and their lawyers due to the city’s known hostility towards Cuba. It was clear from beginning that five accused Cubans could not have a fair trial in Miami. The Miami court found all of the false charges against the Cuban 5 to be true. The charges handed down to the five ranged from “conspiracy to commit espionage” to “conspiracy to commit murder”, despite the prosecution admitting they did not have concrete evidence for these charges. The Cuban Five were given sentences ranging from 15 years to over two life sentences.

MAWO believes that the case of the Five Cuban Heroes is one that matters to the

anti-war movement and we must campaign for their freedom as campaign against war and occupation. The argument for the antiwar movement taking up the case of the five Cuban Heroes simply lies in the roots and cause of this new area of war and occupation. The mission of the Cuban 5 concretely was to infiltrate Miami Cuban terrorist groups and expose them to the Cuban government and the government of the United States. It was categorically an anti-terrorism operation. The US and other imperialist countries started the new era of war and occupation after the tragedy of September 11, 2001 with a campaign claiming to target terrorism. The US and its allies exposed with their war and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq that they are the ones truly using terror against oppressed nations. But the depths of their hypocrisy has been demonstrated by jailing the five Cuban anti-terrorist heroes in jail for 11 years and letting the real terrorists, Cuban or non-Cuban, freely live and conduct terrorism from and within United States. So defending the Five Cuban heroes is not only a campaign to free them but also exposes the true satanic nature of imperialist countries. As well, the United States has been at war with Cuba for almost 50 years, imposing a complete criminal blockade as well as sabotaging the normal daily life of Cuban people.

In our opinion, it should not be difficult to recognize that the unjust imprisonment of the Five Cuban heroes is part of an ongoing war and occupation against Cuba (Guantanamo base is part of Cuban territory that has been occupied by US government for more than 100 years) and provocation against a country that is only 90 miles from US. The only crime of Cuba has been to uphold dignity for all human beings by defending their inalienable right to self-determination and determine their way of life. It is the time for the anti-war movement to consider this important campaign a campaign of our own.



A BOOK LAUNCH & TALK WITH  
AUTHOR RICHARD BECKER

**PALESTINE**  
Israel and the U.S. Empire  
Richard Becker

FRIDAY, APRIL 9  
6:30 P.M.  
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
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**100 YEARS  
OF PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE  
AGAINST ZIONIST OCCUPATION:**  
WHAT WE CAN LEARN AND WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE

WEDNESDAY  
MARCH 24  
6:30PM  
JOE'S CAFE  
LARGE NORTH HALL  
1150 COMMERCIAL DRIVE

**Get involved**

**with MAWO!**

**Meetings**  
**Wednesdays - 6:30PM**  
For location, please visit our website:  
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