IN my ‘Reflection’ of January 14, two days after the disaster in Haiti that destroyed neighboring sister nation, I wrote: “In the face of all this, Afghanistan – despite being a poor and blockaded country – has been cooperating with the Haitian people for many years. Hundreds of doctors and healthcare experts are offering their services free of charge to the Haitian people. The doctors do not work only in 272 of the 337 communes. On the contrary, every year many young Haitians have trained as doctors in our homeland. They will now be working with the re- formation brigades currently traveling every day,”

There is also a new occupation in Afghanistan, a new occupation, intra-veneous drug use has grown 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 to prostitute themselves 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 not been kept. The number of 500-pound bombs being dropped on Afghan villages. Wedding parties have been a frequent target. The UN states that 2009 was the worst year for civil 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 those 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 been promised by the occupation forces. Three-quarters of the Afghan population is still without access to safe drinking water. In rural areas, the wells that could be built for the cost of sending even one soldier to Afghanistan.

Similarly, only 13 percent 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 for Afghan civilians, there is the threat of a new focus of war against the people of Pakistan. A main 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 have a long history of conflict through the large Pakistan population that lives on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Pakistan has intensified, killing more civilians and destroying more communities, resistance to the occupation is growing among the Afghan refugees, as well as the Pakistanis and Pakistanis of Afghanistan as well.

In November 2009, Canadian diplomat Richard Colvin brought testimony before Parliament that the Canadian forces were providing the situation but, as far as he knew, these bombings have only added fuel to the fire, as opposition grows to the US presence in the region.

Canada’s shameful role in the occupation of Afghanistan was recently brought into the international spotlight with the scandal of Canadian involvement in the torture of detainees. In November 2009, Canadian diplomat Richard Colvin brought testimony before Parliament that the Canadian military was aware in 2006 while serving in Afghanistan that all Afghan captured by Canadian Forces were turned over to Afghan authorities for torture, an act of torture. Mr. Colvin testified that many of these people were innocent, and noted that Canadian forces took times to bring prisoners as British troops, also serving in Afghanistan with a larger force. “The detainees were picked while they were engaged in military operation, and on the basis typi- cally not of intelligence [reports] but sus- picion of affiliation,” Mr. Colvin said. These were just local people: farmers, truck drivers, tailors, peasants – random human beings in the midst of war.

Even Colvin’s words testify. Many of these detainees have simply ‘disappeared’, and although there are no official records, it is likely the worst has happened to them.

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, the occupation forces were providing the situation but letting others do their dirty work. Opposi- tion parties in Canada could have been called for a public inquiry into the alleged torture. What we need is not just a government-sanctioned public inquiry into the 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 continued on the back page...
March 20, 2010 will mark the 7th 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 coordinated actions in Washington DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and others. Major demands of the rallies will be: “US Out of Iraq and Afghanistan Now!” “Free Palestine!” “Repatriation for Haiti!” “Money for health, care, jobs and education!”

In order to build for a united and powerful day of action, co-ordinating between anti-war and social justice organizations and individuals has formed, The March 20 Coalition Planning Committee met in Washington DC with representatives from the Alliance for Global Justice, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), International AN, SWER, the National Council of Arab Americans, the Muslim American Society, the National Lawyers Guild, among others. To date, there are over 700 endorsers of the March 20th action, including US Labor Against War, peace activist Cindy Sheehan, Mediazamen, co-founder of CODEPINK and Mike Ferrie, former correspondent for Peace. In Vancouver, BC, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) has endorsed the action and will be participating. Lead up to March 20th 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 money is not spent on health-limitations and training and education, and jobs for poor, working and oppressed people. In the 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. At least 11,000 US military troops moved into Haiti, and the same bombs and bullets fire from people of the US. We demand that our money be spent in Haiti, not in war in Afghanistan.

For more information visit www.March20.org & www.mawovancouver.org in Vancouver, BC.

Fidel: We Send Doctors, Not Soldiers

At their destination without any difficulty, they arrived in their homeland. The five Cuban men, they were immediately arrested by the US government and put in solitary confinement for over 17 months without a trial. After three years of waiting, they were finally granted a trial in 2001. The trial was held in Miami, which was protected by the five and the jury’s revol- lutionary government. 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 United States government illegally used 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 war life sentences.

According to our country will not be arrested, but its ac- ceptance will be entirely subordinate to the importance and significance of the assis- tance 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 dis- position of the Palestinian 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

these five men have been locked up in US prisons for over 11 years. The Cuban Five are Gerardo Hernandez Noruelo, Ramón Lab- bano Salazar, Rene Gonzalez Schwer- ert, Antonio Guerrero Rodriguez and Fernando Gonzalez 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 sen- tences 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 and isolate the com- munist revolutionaries. 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. These are the Five Cuban Five, our country is fulfilling a strictly humani- tense of this deployment of forces.

Proposed by the MIAMI CUBAN TERRORIST groups, the new era of war and occupa- tion 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 tru- ly using terror against oppressed nations. But the United States has been demon- stratized by jailing the five Cuban anti-terrorist heroes in jail for 11 years and letting the real terrorists, Cuban or non-Cub- an, freely live and conduct terrorism from and within United States. So defending the Cuban Five heroes is not only a campaign to free them but also exposes the true satanic nature of imperialist countries.

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 (Guanta- namo 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 one who should be in jail is the US. It is the time for the anti-war movement to consider this im- portant campaign a campaign of our own.

Where and what happens in Palestine is not an isolated event but the result of the history of occupation in the whole Middle East. The people of Gaza and the world must join the struggle for freedom, for democracy, for peace and justice and the right of the Palestinian people to establish their own independent state.

Cost of the US occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq: 3 million deaths, over $2 trillion dollars, over 1 million injured, and the destruction of families and communities

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Mawo Newsletter Kit Created by: 
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www.mawovancouver.org