

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: Voices from Afghanistan

The Takeaway:

- This week's deadly attacks in Kabul underscore the need to do everything we can to provide refuge for any Afghan that may be in danger — and to rethink the devastating U.S. wars that have so tragically failed to bring peace, safety, or stability.
- We must reject the idea that the politicians who vote for war, the generals who lead it, and the think tanks funded by weapons manufacturers, are the only “experts.”
- If we are ever going to truly learn from our failures in Afghanistan over the last 20 years, it's time we listen to, and follow the leadership of, the people who are impacted most: Afghans themselves. This week, we highlight ten articles by the people of Afghanistan and its diaspora.

The Afghan People Can Speak For Themselves

The devastating costs of war continued to be felt in Kabul this week.

On Thursday, a complex attack at the gates of Kabul airport, and elsewhere in the city, resulted in a tragic loss of life — service-member and civilian alike. As [we mourn](#) this suffering, we're reminded of the urgent need to safely do everything humanly possible to save Afghan lives, particularly as the August 31st withdrawal deadline draws closer. The fate of the country afterward, already teetering [on the brink](#) of economic collapse and now threatened with additional broad-based [sanctions](#), is unclear.

We may not know what will come next for the people of Afghanistan. But there's one thing we do know: it's up to us to ensure we do no more harm, and support Afghans in defining their own future. [Last week](#), we shared the state of the situation in Afghanistan, along with our own commentary. This week, we step back to highlight ten articles, interviews, and actions by those whose leadership we must now turn to: Afghans and people of Afghan descent.

[We call on the United States to take action to save Afghan lives and prevent further harm to the Afghan people](#) — Afghans for a Better Tomorrow (8/19/2021)

“Given the two decades of U.S. involvement in this devastating conflict, during which approximately 241,000 people were killed, the United States' moral obligations do not end with its exit from the military theater in Afghanistan. After pursuing 20 years of failed policies that

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have done incredible harm to Afghans, the United States and its NATO allies have a responsibility to accept every Afghan seeking refuge.”

[The Whitewashing of the Afghan War](#) — Emran Feroz, *The American Prospect* (7/14/2021)
“As America’s “longest war” comes to an end, many international news outlets reported about Bagram without mentioning the base’s dark past. It’s part of a revisionist history that overlooks the massive torture apparatus, civilian casualties, and violent corruption caused by the United States’ two decades in Afghanistan.”

[This Is What the Afghan Evacuation Looks Like on the Inside](#) — Arash Azizzada, *The New York Times* (8/24/2021)

“The United States has a clear role in causing the humanitarian disaster slowly unfolding in Afghanistan today. For those millions of Afghans whose lives have been turned upside down by two decades of American military action, ending in a poorly organized withdrawal, nothing less than a complete humanitarian parole — offered to any Afghan whose life is in danger — will do.

[Afghan Activist: George W. Bush’s Claim U.S. War in Afghanistan Protected Women Is a “Shameless Lie”](#) — Malalai Joya, *Democracy Now*, (7/15/2021)

“The catastrophic situation of the women of Afghanistan was a very good excuse for U.S. and NATO to occupy our country. Unfortunately, they pushed us from the frying pan into the fire as they replaced the barbaric regime of the Taliban with the misogynist warlords, who are — their nature seem like the Taliban. They physically changed, imposed on the destiny of Afghan people. That’s why today millions of Afghans are suffering from insecurity, corruption, joblessness, poverty. And still most of Afghan women are the victims.”

[America Has Never Listened to the People of Afghanistan](#) — Bilal Askaryar, *Slate* (8/8/2021)

“It’s possible to mitigate the all but certain humanitarian disaster by enacting a bold plan that grants humanitarian parole to all Afghans in danger—especially the women and girls that the United States spent the last 20 years saying it cared about. The brave Afghans who cannot or will not leave their country also must be supported... Washington hasn’t listened to our voices the last 20 years. This time, it needs to.”

[Meet 16 brave women human rights defenders from Afghanistan](#) — Amnesty International, (11/25/2019)

“I hope the sacrifices other activists and I have made will bring hope, joy and happiness to others. I also wish that we will be able to continue to work on women’s rights without losing hope. My last wish is that all Afghan women, wherever they are, will find a way towards salvation from all the problems and challenges they face.”

[Beyond the Burqa](#) — Zuhra Bahman, *The New Internationalist* (11/1/2008)

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“Most people who, to an untrained Western eye, appear liberated and educated may have had to choose a severe injustice in order to gain and practise the freedom that we see. Women usually lose out in these negotiations, while older men, the representatives of the conservative traditional society, have the upper hand – which they use to their advantage.”

[Death from Above: An Afghan Perspective on the US Drone War](#) — Interview with Emran Feroz, *boundary 2*, (8/1/2020)

“It’s obvious to me that the US drone is a form of terrorism. If you don’t believe me, you can consult the true experts—the victims of these strikes... They will tell you the same thing: drones are a form of terror. I strongly believe that people, especially in the West, need to know what is going on not just in Afghanistan but in all the countries haunted by drone warfare.”

[Personal story: I am Hazara – and I fear for my persecuted people](#) — Shukria Rezaie, *The New Statesman* (8/25/2021)

“While the world’s cameras are fixed on Kabul, elsewhere in Afghanistan, in my mountains and in my village, the Taliban is busy clearing its path. Amnesty International reports that the Taliban tortured and killed nine Hazara men in a remote part of Malistan district last month. We don’t know how many others are suffering the same fate; away from the cities.”

[Diaspora-Led Protests Demand U.S. Support for Afghans](#) — Thread compiled by Win Without War (8/24/2021)

“HAPPENING NOW: hundreds turn up in Oakland demanding the U.S. open borders for Afghan refugees, facilitate mass evacuations, & pay reparations for decades of pillage and causing the current catastrophe leaving millions at risk.”

Experience Is Expertise

We don’t choose to amplify Afghan voices just because it sounds nice. U.S. foreign policy is fundamentally broken. And one key reason is that those who shape it are rarely those who bear its impact. War criminals who land primetime interviews for their “expertise,” the “blob” of the largely white, male foreign policy establishment; arms dealers and mercenaries who profit from war, whatever the human cost — these people have little conception of a world beyond American exceptionalism, and have even less to lose from decades of failed foreign policy. Those on the receiving end, however, do. To craft a new foreign policy, we must redefine who has the expertise to speak on it. When it comes to Afghanistan, the true experts are Afghans themselves. It’s time we listen.

Want to do more?

Find out where to donate, connect, and volunteer to help Afghans in need [here](#). Stay up to date with our regular Afghanistan withdrawal roundups [here](#). And learn more from the following Afghan organizers, activists, and experts:

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- [Arash Azizzada](#), journalist, co-founder, [Afghans for a Better Tomorrow](#), [Afghan Diaspora for Equality and Progress](#)
- [Halima Wali](#), organizer, co-founder, [Afghans for a Better Tomorrow](#), [Afghan Diaspora for Equality and Progress](#)
- [Zuhra Bahman](#), Afghanistan Country Director, [Search for Common Ground](#)
- [Mena Ayazi](#), Program Officer, [Search for Common Ground](#)
- [Samira Hamidi](#), Afghanistan Campaigner, Amnesty International
- [Bilal Askaryar](#), [Welcome With Dignity](#) campaign lead at Women's Refugee Commission
- [Shkula Zadran](#), 2020 Youth Representative of Afghanistan to the UN
- [Pashtana Zalmay Khan Durrani](#), executive director, LEARN

Save Afghan Lives, or Feed the War Machine?

\$6 billion. That's how much the U.S. Congress has either already appropriated (and hasn't been spent) or budgeted for supporting the now-defunct Afghan security forces. With the collapse of the Afghan government, some in Congress are already trying to divert those resources to more endless war – buying more weapons, enriching Pentagon contractors, and fueling the very war machine that brought us here in the first place. [That's an outrage.](#)

Every last dollar intended for the now-defunct Afghan security forces must be put to use to save Afghan lives. Evacuations, refugee resettlement, humanitarian aid — the people of Afghanistan are in critical need, and we owe it to them to do everything we can to help.

Click [here](#) to sign our petition demanding that these funds (\$3 billion already appropriated, \$3 billion in the budget for next year) be used to save Afghan lives.

Then click [here](#) to tweet the same.

BURIED LEDES

Daniel Hale was sentenced to jail for blowing the whistle on the U.S. drone program. Thanks to Hale, we know that in one period in Afghanistan, [90%](#) of those killed by U.S. air strikes were not the intended targets. **We thank Rep. Ilhan Omar for her courage this week in [calling for his pardon](#).**

“Critics of Biden's withdrawal are [using](#) women as props to push for more war.” **A reminder that true feminism *must* be anti-militarist, just as true anti-militarism must be feminist.**

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Five million people [face](#) imminent famine and disease in Yemen. And the United States, despite vague promises to reduce its involvement in the war, remains complicit.

The U.S. government's prosecution of those illegally imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay has been a mockery of justice. Don't take our word for it — take [that of](#) the last living prosecutor of the Nuremberg trials.

While the media focuses more critical attention on the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan than it ever did on the invasion and occupation, let's remember that this war has been ongoing for *decades*. **Here's some important [coverage](#) from the past 20 years of U.S. warfare.**

This week, **the International Monetary Fund (finally) released much-needed special reserve funds** to help countries around the world weather the economic crisis. It's an important start. But now, rich countries must do [their part](#) to redistribute the funds, and then issue more.

This Amazon rainforest is on the verge of collapse. Its Indigenous people face genocide. And the Bolsonaro government is accelerating both. This week, **thousands of Indigenous activists [took to the streets](#) in Brazil's capital to try to stop it.**

Philippine president **Rodrigo Duterte is [running](#) for vice president in the next election**, in an apparent attempt to extend his power beyond his term. Reminder: the United States is a major military backer of the authoritarian, despite his consistent and repeated human rights abuses.

And finally, during difficult times, a reminder that the struggle for justice is long: **100 years ago this week, the largest labor uprising in U.S. history [began](#) in Matewan, West Virginia.**