

The New Jersey PEACE Maker

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Founded 1957—52 Years of Citizen Action

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“GOOD WAR” in AFGHANISTAN NOW “HIGH COST” WAR



Afghan Girls Waiting to Go to School

After eight long years, the so-called “good war” in Afghanistan has become the “unpopular and high cost war”—and it is becoming a quagmire.

General Stanley McChrystal recently requested another 45,000 troops for Afghanistan, on top of the 21,000 additional troops sent earlier this year. His request would bring the total troops in Afghanistan to around 100,000.

The earlier troop surge increased the intensity of the conflict. July and August 2009 saw the two highest monthly totals

for American casualties since the Oct. 7, 2001 invasion. While this increase in violence is not surprising, it is a troubling sign of a rapidly deteriorating situation.

McChrystal's request comes as Afghans and Americans observe the beginning of the 9th year of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and at a time when polls show 54% of Americans oppose the war and want our troops brought home. This represents a major shift in public opinion.

U.S. presence in Afghanistan has had limited positive

NJPA SOUP LUNCHEON SET FOR NOV. 21

NJ Peace Action's 52nd Annual Soup Luncheon is coming up soon on Sat., Nov. 21—at Columbia High School in Maplewood from 11:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Note the new date.) Independent journalist Dahr Jamail will speak on “Iraq and Afghanistan: What Is the Way Out?,” a crucial topic since on Oct. 7, we began our 9th year in Afghanistan and come March, we will have been occupying Iraq for 7 years.

From his perspective as an unembedded journalist in occupied Iraq for nine months, Dahr will provide insights on the direction U.S. policy must take in these two occupied countries. His reporting has shown the truth about what is really happening in Iraq—the suffering of the people and how they are coping under occupation. It also shows why it is time NOW, particularly under this new Administration, to withdraw our troops and provide humanitarian aid and support to these countries. At the same time, the people of these countries themselves, not foreign governments, must lead the way to their future.

The event promises great food, good company, inviting silent auction items, and a timely, informative speaker. Tickets are \$25 but after Nov. 10 go up to \$30. Make your reservation today: by phone--973-259-1126, fax--973-259-1139, mail to NJ Peace Action, 673 Bloomfield Ave., Bloomfield, NJ 07003, or online at www.njpeaceaction.org. We hope to see you there!

New Jersey Peace Action and the New Jersey Peace Action Education Fund—founded in 1957—are committed to working through grassroots citizen action to abolish nuclear weapons, end domestic and international weapons trafficking, demilitarize the federal budget and teach non-violent conflict resolution.



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More News . . .



AN OPEN LETTER TO BARACK OBAMA

NJ Peace Action began faxing its “Open Letter to President Obama” to mark the eighth anniversary of the War in Afghanistan. October 7, 2001 was the day that America invaded Afghanistan – a war that today the majority of Americans polled do not support. Eight years and two days later, President Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize placing him under an extraordinary amount of pressure to keep his peaceful campaign promises. The majority of the population was ready for the change that Obama promised to bring, after 8 disastrous years of the Bush administration and unfinished wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the Open Letter that is faxed to the White House daily, there are some facts and motivating ideas to give Obama that “push” he needs to keep the promises of hope he inspired. (To see and circulate the entire Open Letter, visit NJPA’s web site, <http://njpeaceaction.org>. Please return signed copies to the NJPA office at 673 Bloomfield Ave., Bloomfield, NJ 07003). During his campaign speeches and plans for a better America, Obama expressed his plan to withdraw the troops from Iraq in August 2010, an unrealistically late date to end a war that should never have begun. NJPA is determined to reach out to Obama as much as possible to let him know we want him to succeed in keeping his campaign promises.

The letter also details one campaign promise made by Obama that needs to be broken—to deploy more U.S. troops to Afghanistan. NJ Peace Action is asking that Obama immediately withdraw our troops from Afghanistan and Iraq and that he promote U.S. aid for reconstruction in both countries, led by the people of each of those countries.

Considering that the end of Obama’s first year is approaching, America anticipates seeing progress on the issues discussed in the letter. NJPA promises Obama to help him be successful in leading the people and making decisions worthy of a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, committed to promoting the cause of peace in our country and our world. Our grassroots voices for peace will be heard loudly and clearly wherever conflict, violence, and injustice compel these voices to be sounded.

Written by Alexandra Cruz, Montclair High School student, after faxing a copy of the Open Letter to the White House

AFGHANISTAN, cont’d

impact on the lives of the majority of Afghan people. Billions of dollars have been spent on security and military operations, \$100 million daily. The troop surge will cost \$5.5 billion for fiscal year 2009 alone.

Think of how that money could have been used to address the real problems faced by Afghans today. The Afghan people need something other than continued war and occupation—including schools, roads and honest elections.

This is a critical moment in the fight to end the occupation of Afghanistan and bring the troops home. President Obama admits to feeling caught between General McChrystal’s request and the growing displeasure of the American people.

This is the time when those who object to the steep human and financial costs of the continued occupation must make their voices heard—calling for a surge NOT in troops, but in diplomacy and for the Afghan people to reclaim their home as U.S. troops return to theirs.

Excerpts from an Op-Ed piece written by NJPA Executive Director, Madelyn Hoffman. To read the entire piece, visit <http://www.opednews.com/populum/page.php?a=98368&show=votes#allcomments>

Report on October 14 Lobby Visit at Senator Menendez’s Office



A strong contingent of NJ Peace Action members met successfully with an aide to U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez on Oct. 14 as part of the Week of Action events scheduled to commemorate the 8th Anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan on Oct. 7. After a week of calling on our members to contact their Congressional representatives and senators to support legislation calling for an exit strategy from Afghanistan (H.R. 2404) and no more funding for the war in Afghanistan (H.R. 3699), this meeting provided an opportunity to speak face to face about our concerns. (See legislative section for more info about these bills.) The group included: Carol Gay, Lorna Henkel, Anna Nelson, Jo Sippie-Gora, Nancy Taiani, and Bennet Zurfosky. We addressed, in particular, the urgency for ending the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the potential for nuclear abo-

lition through Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and other disarmament treaties, our concerns about delays in closing Guantanamo and the upcoming demonstration in November calling for closing the School of the Americas (Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) at Fort Benning, Georgia. Notes on our presentations of these topics will be passed on to Sen. Menendez’s aide on the Foreign Relations Committee. Those who attended left the meeting knowing that our impassioned voices had been heard. We must now see if Senator Menendez takes the lead on these issues. The above photo was taken at an earlier lobby visit, with Sen. Frank Lautenberg in August.



Legislative Action Alert



Please call your U.S. Senators and Congressmen to urge action on these bills.

Afghanistan: We still need to continue pushing for **H.R. 2404**, which requires an Afghanistan exit strategy by the end of 2009. It now has 99 co-sponsors, but only three NJ Reps.—Donald Payne, Steven Rothman and Rush Holt. As we enter our ninth year in Afghanistan, it is more important than ever to get your Congressman to back this bill. **H.R. 3699**, which would bar any increase in the number of troops serving in Afghanistan, has **NO** NJ sponsors.

Close Guantanamo: The Lawful Interrogation and Detention Act, S. 147 and H.R. 374, requires closing the prison at Guantanamo within a year of enactment. Detainees would have to be charged with a crime and moved to a U.S. prison, transferred to an international tribunal authorized by the United Nations, transferred to their home country consistent with U.S. and international law and the Convention Against Torture, or released. It also limits use of certain interrogation techniques, prohibits interrogation by private contractors and require notifying the Red Cross when individuals are detained. Introduced by Diane Feinstein, D-CA, it **still** has no New Jersey co-sponsors.

Close the School of the Americas: The Latin America Military Training Review Act, H.R. 2567, would suspend operation of the School of the Americas as a first step toward shutting it down for good. One section of the bill calls for an investigation of human rights abuses at the School. Introduced by James McGovern, D-Mass, on May 21, it has 84 co-sponsors, only three of them from NJ — Rush Holt, Donald Payne and Steven Rothman.

Nuclear Weapons: There are two house resolutions. **H. RES. 278 (Global Securities Priorities Resolution)** recognizes “the paramount need to address the threat of international terrorism and protect the international security of the United States by reducing the number of and accessibility to nuclear weapons and preventing their proliferation, and directing a portion of the resulting savings towards child survival, hunger, and universal education, and calling on the President to take action to achieve these goals.” Introduced by James McGovern, D-Mass, it has no NJ sponsors. **H. RES. 333, recognizing Nonproliferation Options for Nuclear Understanding to Keep Everyone Safe or NO NUKES**, calls for nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. Introduced by Lynn Woolsey, D-CA, Rush Holt is the only NJ cosponsor.

Toll-free number for Congressional switchboard: 800-517-5696

Yes! I want to be part of NJ Peace Action's work for real change in America! Sign me up!

I will help with a contribution of

\$1,000 Benefactor

\$100 Supporter

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\$52 Dollar-a-Week for Peace

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Please bill my credit card: _____ monthly _____ quarterly

Contribute \$100 or more and receive bulletins with legislative alerts, a local calendar of events and (pick one):

earth peace flag DVD of Rabbi Michael Lerner at our Annual Dinner w/special message from Rep. Dennis Kucinich

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**Journalist and Soup Speaker
DAHR JAMAIL**

**A 10/09 below your name on the mailing label means you are NOT YET a Peace Action member. Please look inside for a way to join.*

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Quote for the Season . . .

"Since an informed citizenry is the basis for a healthy democracy, independent, non-corporate media are more crucial today than ever before....I feel it imperative to maintain a solid presence of independent journalists in Iraq, as there are so few. Most of the mainstream media are just parroting the news fed to them by the CPA and military."

—Dahr Jamail, independent, unembedded journalist

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO END THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

Here are some things you can do now to join the growing number of people opposing the surge and wanting all troops to be brought home from Afghanistan.

- Speak with your Congressperson's Legislative Director regarding Rep. Barbara Lee's H.R. 3699, which would deny funding for a troop escalation in Afghanistan, and Rep. Jim McGovern's H.R. 2404, which would demand an exit strategy for Afghanistan by the end of December 2009 (See page 3 for more information about these bills.)
- Call the White House to say - "Bring the troops home!"
- Schedule a meeting with your Congressional Representative and Senators on Afghanistan. NJPA has already met with Senator Robert Menendez on this issue. The Congressional Switchboard is 202-224-3121 or 202-225-3121.

You could also hold a House Party at which you could show films such as *Rethink Afghanistan* or *Afghan Women: A History of Struggle*, to educate your friends and neighbors about the choices we need to make to end the Afghan War, and write letters/postcards to our Representatives and Senators against the war. NJ Peace Action will help you organize your House Party. As of this writing, House Parties are scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 14 in Bloomfield and Sunday, Dec. 5 in Montclair, with other House Parties in the works for January and February. Please contact the office at 973-259-1126 to schedule yours!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ABBY MALMGREEN— 100 YEARS OLD ON OCT. 26!