

# **The Kandahar massacre and the fight against war**

## **Statement by Jerry White, SEP candidate for US president**

**Jerry White, Socialist Equality Party candidate for US president  
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As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for US president, I share the revulsion felt by millions of people throughout the world over Sunday's brutal murder of at least 16 Afghan civilians, including nine children, that has been attributed to a US soldier in Kandahar province.

Mass demonstrations have erupted in Afghanistan, where the vast majority of the population is opposed to the continued presence of tens of thousands of NATO troops. At the same time, there is growing popular opposition to the war in the United States itself.

Confronted with universal outrage, the aim of the Obama administration is to attempt to find some way to maintain the interests of the American ruling class and divert attention from those who are truly responsible.

Obama insisted on Tuesday that there should be no "hasty withdrawal" from Afghanistan. He declared that he was "heartbroken" by the incident, and that the military would conduct an investigation. "We will follow the facts wherever they lead us, and we will make sure that anybody who is involved is held fully accountable with the full force of the law."

This is simply a cynical lie. Any serious investigation into the causes of Sunday's massacre would require the prosecution of top government officials responsible for the war, in both the Bush and Obama administrations.

The claim made by administration officials, and parroted in the media, that the killing is "not who we are," is also a lie. While this latest crime certainly does not reflect the sentiment of the American people, it is entirely in line with the brutal wars waged by the American ruling class.

The past 10 years have seen the perpetration of one atrocity after the next—Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib,

the destruction of Fallujah, Iraq in 2004, the Haditha massacre of 24 Iraqi civilians in 2005, the countless drone strikes and nighttime raids in Afghanistan and Pakistan that routinely massacre dozens of people.

These daily acts of barbarism are swept under the rug by the US media, sanitized as attacks on "terrorists" or, when civilian deaths cannot be denied or ignored, rationalized as "collateral damage." In a clear demonstration of the attitude of the Obama administration, Bradley Manning, who allegedly sought to expose these crimes by releasing documents to WikiLeaks, now faces a court martial, life in prison, or even the death penalty.

Atrocities like this accompany every war of colonial aggression. There are many parallels between Sunday's incident and the My Lai massacre of up to 500 unarmed civilians by US soldiers in Vietnam in 1968, 44 years ago this Friday. Asked about the earlier event on Monday, Obama insisted that the bloodbath in Kandahar was different: "It's not comparable. It appeared you had a lone gunman who acted on his own. In no way is this representative of the enormous sacrifices that our men and women have made in Afghanistan."

The attempt to present the Kandahar massacre as the act of madness perpetrated by a "lone gunman" explains nothing. First of all, the circumstances of Sunday's killing are by no means clear, and there are reports that several soldiers may have been involved.

Moreover, the occupation by its very nature produces such atrocities. American soldiers are taught to treat the entire population as the enemy, which has an element of truth given the mass opposition. The soldiers are themselves treated with contempt by the military brass

and the American government, sent in tour after tour, worn down mentally and physically to the point of breakdown.

While the immediate perpetrator of this crime must be punished, ultimate responsibility falls on those who launched the war and have carried it out for more than a decade.

The Socialist Equality Party demands the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US troops from Afghanistan, as part of the dismantling of the entire Pentagon war machine.

The American ruling class has used the events of September 11, 2001 as a pretext to launch a series of wars without end. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in the process, and entire societies devastated. One country after the next has been invaded or bombed: Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Libya. New threats are being made against Iran and Syria. The aim of these wars is to establish US domination over the most important centers of energy resources and world power.

The American working class has no interest in these wars! The same ruling class that engages in criminality abroad is also undermining the most basic democratic rights and carrying out a wholesale attack on the population of the United States. Just last week, Attorney General Eric Holder presented a pseudo-legal justification for the Obama administration's policy of assassinating anyone, including US citizens.

There is growing mass opposition in the United States to war. Recent polls show that 60 percent of the population believes the war in Afghanistan was not worth fighting, and more than half think the US should withdraw before any "training mission" for Afghan troops is complete.

This anti-war sentiment finds no expression in the political establishment. Mass opposition against the Iraq war was channeled by the pro-Democratic Party "left" organizations behind the election of Obama, who has now launched new wars and is planning more. Once again, these groups are preparing to support Obama's election campaign.

The fight against war will be a central component of the SEP's election campaign. Opposition to imperialism must be connected to the growing struggles of the working class against wage cutting, austerity and the assault on democratic rights.

An end to war requires the establishment of a global society that is based not on the predatory interests of a tiny elite, but on the social needs of the vast majority. This is the fight for socialism. We urge all those looking for a way forward in the struggle against war to join the SEP and help build our election campaign.



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