

Afghan war crimes report suppressed

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The attempted suppression of an Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) report on atrocities and war crimes committed by Afghan governments and warlords from 1978 to 2001 is devastating exposure of the US puppet regime in Kabul.

The AIHRC, an organisation set up by the Kabul regime itself, has documented the criminal record of the warlords who run the regime and the powers that backed them, above all the United States.

The 800-page report, entitled “Conflict Mapping in Afghanistan Since 1978,” was prepared over a six-year period from 2005 by a team of 40 researchers working with international legal and forensic experts. It found evidence of 180 mass graves, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, rape, and the destruction of towns and villages. Commissioner Ahmad Nader Nadery reported that the report tallied a million killed—not all through war crimes—and another 1.3 million disabled.

The report catalogues the crimes committed by all sides in the wars that raged in Afghanistan, including the 1978–1992 Soviet-backed regime and the CIA-backed traditionalist *mujahedin* militias that fought it, overthrew it, and then divided Afghanistan between themselves.

It details the brutal civil war that followed the fall of the Soviet-backed regime, as Islamist warlords whom Washington had hailed as “freedom fighters” battled for power and control of resources, including the lucrative Afghan opium trade. Atrocities and human rights abuses continued under the Taliban—who were formed with Pakistani backing and tacit US support—as well as their rival northern warlords.

Unsurprisingly, current Afghan officials named as responsible for atrocities objected to the release of the report, only portions of which were leaked to the media.

Afghan officials named in the report include First Vice President Muhammad Qasim Fahim, a Tajik warlord; Second Vice President Karim Khalili, a Hazara warlord; General Atta Mohammed Noor, another Tajik militia leader who is currently a provincial governor; and General Abdul Rashid Dostum, a notorious Uzbek warlord, who is chief of staff to the supreme commander of the Afghan Armed Forces.

The political prominence of such thugs underlines the venal, corrupt character of the regime of Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai. From the outset, it rested on a network of reactionary local and provincial warlords, militia commanders and tribal leaders.

The suppression of the war crimes report would not be possible without US complicity. According to the *New York Times*, the US embassy in Kabul objected to its publication; US officials said that its release would “open up old wounds.”

The report exposes not only Afghan warlords, but the US and its allies, including Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. They funded, armed and trained the various reactionary Islamist militias that fought the Soviet-backed regime in the 1980s, tore the country apart in the 1990s, and have ruled it in collaboration with Washington over the last decade.

Stopping as it does in 2001, the document says little about the crimes committed by US and NATO forces who began occupying Afghanistan that year. However,

even the limited details of US operations in Afghanistan in the final months of 2001 point to war crimes. The CIA worked closely with its warlord allies, including in the mass murder of alleged Taliban detainees in the Qala-i Janga fortress near Mazar-i Sharif.

The voluminous report devotes only two pages to “violations by US forces.” However, these include US bombing of civilians, the use of indiscriminate weapons including cluster bombs, prolonged detention of prisoners without due process, torture and renditions.

Washington’s sensitivity over the Afghan report is not simply related to its past crimes. By reviewing the decades from 1978 and 2001, the document is a reminder that US imperialism not only helped to create brutes such as Dostum, Fahim and Khalili. It also funded and armed the Afghan and foreign Islamist militias that are currently fighting the US occupation—the Pashtun warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Al Qaeda international terrorist network.

Whether Islamists like Hekmatyar were lionised by the American media as “freedom fighters” or denounced as “terrorists” depended entirely on whether or not they served US interests. The Taliban’s reactionary edicts, including against women, were only condemned by Washington from the late 1990s, as the Taliban became an obstacle to US plans for oil and gas pipelines across Afghanistan from Central Asia.

This history exposes the bogus character of the US “war on terror,” that was used as a pretext for wars to boost US domination over the energy-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia and to set up the infrastructure of police-state rule at home.

Moreover, the US and its European allies are now exploiting the criminal methods developed in Afghanistan elsewhere in the Middle East. In the name of “liberating” the Libyan people, the US and NATO armed and backed opposition militias, including those with ties to Al Qaeda, that overthrew Gaddafi with the aid of a massive NATO bombing campaign. The current regime in Tripoli is composed of Islamists, adventurers, and other US assets just as reactionary as

their counterparts in Kabul.

Now the Obama administration is also backing Islamists, Al Qaeda forces, and other militias to oust Syrian president Bashir al Assad and install a pro-US regime in Damascus.

Washington hopes to suppress the Afghan report so that these truths about its crimes in Afghanistan do not fuel opposition to the criminal policies it now pursues throughout the Middle East.

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