

## **NCCD Afghanistan Seminar: Exit then Engagement. Held on Monday, March 28 2011 at Turnbull House, Wellington, from 3 pm to 9.30 pm**

### **Report by Robin Halliday**

The Seminar was organised by the National Consultative Committee on Disarmament – a liaison group representing 23 NGOs with a focus on Peace and Disarmament. Some are Pacifist, some have a wide social brief while others are more specialised.

NCCD first met at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in November 1977.

Representatives meet throughout the year and hold Conferences/Seminars on topical issues and briefing and debriefing sessions with International NGOs and with the Minister and the Ministry. This year looking at the imminent withdrawal of our PRT in Bamiyan we held a Seminar in late March with Professor William Maley a recognised academic expert on Afghanistan from ANU as keynote speaker.

Prof Maley gave a very comprehensive overview of the current situation based on its history geography and relationship with Pakistan. Reminding us that between 1929 and 1979 Afghanistan was considered one of the most stable countries in Asia but when exposed to the impact of political and ideological forces that were beyond the capacity of its people to control it fell to the Soviet Union. Uniting at first to drive them out its difficult political geopolitical environment and the influence of first the Mujahideen and then the Taliban the concept of State were limited to a Capital city without functioning state mechanism

The role of the Taliban is linked closely with Pakistan and the border which divides the Pashtuns

While the death toll of Afghans in the years 1978 – 87 was fifty times higher than in 2010 and the number of refugees has fallen dramatically the outlook for ordinary Afghans today is not encouraging Quoting an Afghan acquaintance Doris Lessing wrote “We cry to you for help, but the wind blows away our words”.

Colonel Richard Hall (rt ) Commander of NZ PRT 2008/09 drawing on quotes from his book “The Long Road to Progress” outlined the work of PRT – which he stressed is not a development agency and not a humanitarian agency but to quote Kofi Annan “there is no security without development and no development without security what the PRT Handbook calls as military as necessary as civilian as possible. Bamiyan is a beautiful but barren valley with an outstanding women Governor and a predominately Shia population. The PRT’s role he saw was to train, mentor, monitor and as a transition force lead from Military to Civilian to Afghan. We have started the stage of transition to Civilian and are moving to Afghan. There are many challenges to be overcome Capacity building, ending Corruption, Land and sustainability issues and leadership and governance.

Jacquelyn Shannon outlined the role of the Police and their relationship with the Military. Their role is training for the Afghans to take control of security but the role of the Judiciary needs to be closely linked and this does not always happen.

Mike Seawright spoke of NZAIDs projects, small by international standards but well thought of. When outlining why New Zealand NZ decided to deploy troops in Afghanistan he reminded us that we are a Multilateralist that pays its dues and that it is UN mandated. Reiterating what Col Richard Hall had said about us being in a transition stage of handing over and said this includes the three pillars of security, governance and development. There is a great need in the development context for education and health services that fits within the NZ Development Assistance Mandate to reduce

poverty and contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world. The Policy Review of 2009 stated that the ‘re-alignment of New Zealand’s effort should include a greater emphasis on development assistance and promoting good governance and New Zealand development assistance should include a greater focus on agriculture and rural livelihoods, with continued engagement in health and education. Much of this is focused in Bamiyan not only because of contacts made through the PRT but because it fits the criteria of developmental need. The three focus areas are Rural development – agriculture, energy and eco-tourism, Social Service Delivery – Health and Education, and Community Safety and Access to Justice – Afghan National Policing < NZPRT & NZ Defence Force.

After dinner we heard a very thoughtful presentation from Marianne Elliott on Human Rights – A tale of Blurred Lines Bad Deals and brave Hope. She spoke of her work both with UNMA and as a Human Rights advocate. There are blurred lines between military and development agencies – real or otherwise - and Bad deals especially for women – but there are to Brave Hopes – but they require more attention and resources not less, protecting rather than trading away Human Rights and stability through rather than instead of justice.

Jamila Homayun told the story of a young mine victim’s campaign to get his country Afghanistan, to sign the Cluster Munitions Convention.

Under Agenda for Insiders Shaukat Zamani shared his dreams for his country He believes in it in spite of the difficulties. Based on his own experience first as a refugee in Pakistan and later in New Zealand he believes the people of Afghanistan need the education and skills to reach out and join the world community. I have attached his proposals which are both hopeful and cautious but come from a deep understanding of a country he visits regularly.

Mohammad Ali Amiri – a Tampa refugee – and now Wellington Chair of the Afghan Community echoed his sentiments thanking us of assisting them and calling for continued assistance in the area of Education Health and Reparation of Refugees. Paper attached.

Bob Maysmor and Pedram Pirnia told us of Porirua’s sister city relationship of Pataka’s excellent exhibition and the interest and support it received. In February Dr Habiba Sorabi, Governor of Bamiyan visited New Zealand to thank the Government for their support She met with Jenny Brash the Mayor of Porirua and invited the city to form a Sister City relationship. This was formalised in October 2008 and planning for an exhibition was planned at the Pataka Museum. The primary objective of the exhibition was to celebrate the Sister-City relationship and to inform and educate the people of the region about the lifestyle culture history and land of the people of Bamiyan It ran for 3 months and over 60,000 visited it. This included children from local schools. A 204 page full-colour book was published to record the exhibition. The overwhelming positive response to the exhibition and programme showed that the economic drivers that so often determine the establishment of such relationships were totally overshadowed by the warmly welcomed and greatly acclaimed cultural dimension of this unique relationship.

A comprehensive set of papers were distributed beforehand and are available on NCCD website [www.converge.org.nz/pma/nccd1laf.htm](http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/nccd1laf.htm).

A full report of proceeding is available on request [rhalliday@paradise.net.nz](mailto:rhalliday@paradise.net.nz).

**Shaukat Zamani**

**1- Thank you:**

- Robin Halliday for inviting me to the conference.
- The NZ Gov., NZ people for helping Afghanistan.
- Gatherings like this indeed helps keep the cause of the Afghan people alive.

## 2- Background

- This is a critical juncture for Afghanistan:
- There is a fatigue on the part of the international community after nearly 10 years of involvement.
- But don't abandon Afghanistan: There is a risk of fundamental values like democracy, individual liberty & women's rights gradually falling off the agenda in Afghanistan. These, indeed, will need a long-term commitment from the international community.
- The immediate challenge is to get the "transition": The process of transferring security responsibility from NATO-led International Security Assistant Force (ISAF) to Afghan National Security Forces.

## 3-Transition

- As an Afghan I commend Mr Obama for taking the courageous route of "surge", "coin or counterinsurgency" or "nation building" in Afghanistan.
- After years of neglect by the previous admin, Iraq, Obama brought Afghanistan to the fore of international attention, and made it a US foreign policy priority.
- It was also refreshing for an Afghan like myself to see the new regime in Washington call for a more "responsible, accountable, transparent" government in Afghanistan.
- As a result of the above, the Taliban momentum is reversed; Afghan Gov authority reestablished in many remote parts of southern Afghanistan; Population slowly building confidence in the process.
- The result: Allowing for the start of the process of "transition" of security arrangements to Afghans in Kabul, Bamyan, Panjsher, Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Lashkar Gah, and Mehterlam.

## 4-Personal anxiety about Transition

- There is a lot of focus on transfer of responsibility for security.
- We need also is a long-term commitment to democracy, to building a responsible & transparent gov in AFN.

What worries me is:

- The lack of adequate partnership by the Afghan regime
- A lack of trust between the Karzai regime and the US. By many accounts, the relationship is “poisonous”.
- With that in mind, I wonder how the issue of the Afghan political settlement will pan out.
- By all accounts, the so-called “peace process with Taliban is not a coherent process – no understanding between parties.
- So I am quite anxious as an Afghan.

## 5-My own Involvement in AFN

### Background:

- I went to Afghanistan in early 2010.
- Have always wanted to get involved in AFN.
- Having had a privilege here of “modern education” in NZ, I want to relate that AFN, my original homeland.

### Two issues inspired me:

- A) The coming to power of Obama.
- B) The farcical nature of the Afghan Presidential Elections 2009.

### Personal Beliefs:

- There realization that Western involvement is not for ever, and Afghans themselves must take advantage of the remaining few years, when the international community still has some interest in Afghanistan, to reform and rebuild our vital societal institutions: Education, democracy, human rights etc.

## 6-Visit to Kabul and the establishment of my charity organization: Help Afghan Education (HAE): [www.helpafghaneducation.org](http://www.helpafghaneducation.org)

- Upon my return from Afghanistan, I established HAE to help education in Afghanistan.
- I saw an opportunity to work with existing technocrats in Afghanistan.
- My aim is to help bridge the gap between Afghan education and the rest of the world by:
  - 1) to help promote modern education
  - 2) Make it more accessible: Current Fees are astronomical.

### HAE Focus Areas:

- HAE education involves 3 levels: Certificate, Diploma and University.
- 1-Certificate program involves Provincial English and IT Education Centers for rural Afghanistan to help improve the quality and delivery of English and IT Education.
- 2- Our Diploma program will involve the introduction of the first TESOL teacher training program in Afghanistan. This will be internationally accredited. Other programs involve journalism.
- 3- Hopeful that one day my efforts will lead to the establishment of a modern university in Afghanistan offering modern, world class education accessible to many young Afghan men and men.
- At the heart of my quest lies that need for learning English language and IT.
- Learning these transformed my life in Pakistan when I lived as a refugee.
- I have recruited educators from around the world, including from New Zealand, USA, UAE, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### Difficulties facing HAE:

- Lack of funding, insufficient resources
- My request for the international community: Support the self-help efforts of emerging technocratic leaders in Afghanistan as the best way to a sustainable Afghan development.

Thank you all for attending the conference today and supporting Afghanistan.

**Afghanistan:  
Exit then Engagement**

**Mohammed Ali Amirr**

As-Salaam-Alaikum and Kio Ora

The question was asked that “what probably all of the 52 countries with defence forces in Afghanistan would like to bring them home, and what would that mean for ordinary Afghans?”

Well, in my opinion, there will be so many problems, but I would like to mention the main four points which the majority of afghan people will face.

- **Conflict, violence and terror.**
- **Less education (Especially for women).**
- **Health problems.**
- **More refugees.**

As we know the history of Afghanistan there were always violence and terror and in those situation always the civilian who was and will be the victims of the war and crimes. It is widely believed in Afghanistan that when the oversea trips withdrawn from Afghanistan, the situation will get back to where it was in 2001, and there will be more people victim of war and crimes. So to improve that, we need the international committees to help Afghanistan and support Afghans after they withdrawn from Afghanistan. So how the international committees can help? I would like to answer to this question by a quote from **Lao Tzu**

*"Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a life time"*

Yes, it has been almost a decade that international committees involved in Afghanistan's problem but as we can see still we have some problems in Afghanistan and that problem never been solved in many years, no matter who came to Afghanistan and in the end they give up. So my point is if the international committees help afghan force to stand on their own feed and they could defend their own country. So right now, afghan forces need to be trained by professional overseas forces and that how they can stand for their rights and keep the country under their control and keep peace and security in the country. That way those committees also don't have to pay millions of dollars toward Afghanistan's security and etc...

however, one question the international committees should ask themselves, why they never been successful in this one decade to bring peace in Afghanistan? Yes, this is a good question, because there are so many things going on behind the scenes, meaning, that each group in Afghanistan supported by the neighbour counties, that is why there never been success toward improvement in those many years.

### **My second point is education.**

Education is very important to any society in the world, and Afghanistan is one of those societies who need education. Education opens people's mind, eyes, ears and mouth, it able you to see world better and understand the realty and it able you to know your right and stand for your right and could defend your right and so on. Especially women are one of the majority groups who were the victims of not having the right to be educated and they suffer in many years in Afghanistan. I believe women are one of the main wheels who run the societies and we need to keep that wheel to run the country beside of the men who also work hard in society.

As I said before, the international committees can send teachers to Afghanistan and try to educate the teachers so those Afghan teachers could educate other afghan people, and also give a scholarship to the teachers to come out of the country and study in overseas universities and get back to their country and serve the society.

### **My third point is health.**

According to the World health Organization Afghanistan was ranged the 173<sup>rd</sup> country in health system. This is very sad, and we need to improve that to better level, and so many people die every day because of diseases. The number of doctors and nurse are not enough comparing to the needs of the society and we need to improve that to improve the health system, and here education come again, if people were educated they knew what to do when they get some sort of instruction from doctor and nurses. Therefore we need to help those doctors and nurses who need

more support and even they could continue study to keep their knowledge update with modern technologies and keep them self on the of any new sickness and be confident on their jobs. So again we cannot do that without international committees, so that is my request if those 52 countries withdrawing their troops, but keep their support until afghan people stand on their own feed.

**Finally my last point is about Refugees.**

This is very clear for everyone around the world, that where's no safety; there will be so many people who will be seeking safe place to live. Right now we have three million afghan refugees who only live in Iran and Pakistan and so many around the world too. So if we have safety, good education system and good health system why we should have that many refugees around the world? There will be not that much!! Once again I would like to end my presentation with the same quote that I gave in the beginning of my presentation

*"Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a life time"*

**Lao Tzu**