

October 12, 2011

Statement by Curtis Bell.

In support of a Portland City Council Resolution expressing the desire of the Council to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and bring the dollars home.

My name is Curtis Bell I am a retired scientist from OHSU. I am a member of the Peace Action Committee of First Unitarian Church and have been active for peace within the faith community as a whole. I am working with others to promote a rally, march and forum on Saturday October 15 with the theme: "10 Years in Afghanistan: End the Wars – Bring our \$\$ home." The US has been at war in Afghanistan for ten years now and in Iraq for nine years.

A few days ago Mayor Adams told the Oregonian that Portland should prepare for hefty budget cuts of as much as 8%. He warned of possible closure of fire stations, recreation centers and pools, as well as the elimination of services such as rental inspections, graffiti abatement, and emergency housing assistance. All this on top of previous deep cuts in services.

I am reminded of a sign I saw last night at the Occupy Portland site, "Mr. Policeman, you are just one layoff from being one of us."

People's needs are not being met in the current economic crisis and the problems are getting worse.

Faith leaders have often said that a budget is about values and morality. I believe that the budget of the City of Portland is indeed a moral document. I believe the city's money goes to meet real human needs. But I do not believe that the same can be said for the budget of the Federal Government.

It is not a moral document. Over half the discretionary budget goes for war. Wars that have killed and wounded 100's of thousands of people including tens of thousands of American citizens, devastated countries, and made us less safe by increasing the threat of terrorism. Portland alone has contributed 1.6 billion dollars to just the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (National Priorities Project), and no end is in sight. The wars are costing us dearly, and giving us less than nothing in return.

The Federal Government is unresponsive and gridlocked. A change there from spending our money on war and militarism to spending it for real human needs is either impossible or only possible with truly massive pressure from the grass roots. The Portland City Council can, and should, be a part of that grass roots effort.

Mayor Sam Adams and other Mayors of the United States were a part of that effort when they voted this last June at the US Conference of Mayors for a resolution

10 Years After: Welcome to the Failed State of Americastan

by Johnny Barber
October 4, 2011

From Voices for Creative Non-violence <http://vcnv.org/>

As we step off the Turkish Air flight and walk across the dusty tarmac to the terminal, we are greeted by a large billboard. In big bold English it proclaims, "Welcome to the Home of the Brave." It stops me in my tracks. I shake my head, thinking, "damn weird" and continue in to passport control. After waiting in a short line, I present my American passport to the guard in the booth. He doesn't acknowledge me. He flips through the shiny new pages until he gets to the visa. He stamps it. He turns to the picture. He gives me a precursory glance and hands the passport back to me. I turn and enter Afghanistan.

I have come here with two friends from Voices for Creative Non-Violence, forming a small delegation interested in developing relationships with ordinary Afghans and gathering stories of everyday life since the American invasion in 2001. After collecting our luggage and taking a short bus ride to the parking area, Hakim, Mohammed Jan, and his brother Noor greet us warmly. Hakim and Mohammed Jan are our hosts and the organizing force of the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers.

On our trip from the airport to Kabul, Hakim offers an update since the last delegation has left. Things have deteriorated considerably. People are feeling more hopeless, even amongst the youth group. There have been no opportunities for optimism. As we drive the clogged streets through clouds of brown dust, I watch as small children with huge sacks slung across their backs pick at scraps along the streets. Men pull huge carts filled with scrap metal. Beggars on crutches stand in the streets or lie by the street side, hoping for any generosity from the passing cars.

Not a single sector of public or private life is running properly. Tension is high. The people may appear unwelcoming and angry, because they are. Hakim tells us you may see people in a heated argument end it by laughing. In order to diffuse the tension of the moment, they shift to a joke.

Attacks in Kabul are on the rise. In just the last month there has been the brazen attack at the US embassy as well as the suicide bombing that killed Rabbani, an advisor for the Karzai government as well as a warlord, (responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands, engaged in 'peace talks' with the Taliban), in his own home.

We are told that it might be best to avoid following a routine. Do not to travel alone. Do not go out at night. Do not linger outside of our car, or our apartment. It's best not draw attention to ourselves. We are reminded that not only do Afghans distrust foreigners, but also, many have come to hate us over these ten long years. Ten years. Untold numbers of deaths, 200 billion dollars (or is it 300 billion?) spent on eradicating the Taliban, eliminating a safe haven for Al Qaeda, and stabilizing Afghanistan, to date, all lost causes. The Karzai government is either

despised or mocked. The people recognize it for what it is, a puppet regime that is not responsible to the Afghan people but to outside forces. Corruption is rampant, crushing poverty everywhere. Allegiances shift easily as desperation and greed drive people to make decisions based on possible cash rewards. Nothing works. The education system, the health care system, and the public works systems are in tatters. The various police forces, even in the safest sections of Kabul, can't (or won't) stop the violence. The Red Cross states that Afghanistan is more dangerous now than at anytime in the last 30 years. You can't drink the water from the tap, electricity goes off and on in rolling blackouts, the sewer system is archaic, with open trenches of raw sewerage running through the streets. There is no garbage collection. 200 billion dollars spent and there is little to nothing to show for it.

Family systems are in tatters as well. Everywhere you turn, family members have been lost to war. Hundreds of thousands dead, hundreds of thousands maimed. War has divided families and dispersed the fragments throughout the country. Civil society is falling apart because people have lost a sense of community, things have deteriorated to 'everyone for themselves'. Distrust is a cancer spread throughout society. Ethnic groups distrust each other even more than usual. Business associates distrust each other, neighbors distrust each other, and even family members distrust each other.

To most of the population, peace is an impossibility. Most feel a turn toward more violence is inevitable. Possibilities of peace are not part of the dialogue, few are even willing to voice the words 'peace' or 'non-violence'. Most people only talk about selecting the best of several very poor possibilities and all of these options are militaristic ones. People are being squeezed between the insurgency and occupying powers. For some, especially in Kabul, the best of the poor choices is continuing on the path of US occupation. The sense of hopelessness is palpable, people feel there is no way out. Harun, a young Pastun tells us, "Perhaps Afghans just need to suffer more."

I ask myself, "What am i doing here?" This entails the broader question, "Why are we, America, here?" Former President Bush famously said, "We will fight them over there so we do not to fight them over here." I don't think it ever dawned on him that if we don't fight them over there, we might not need to fight them at all.

America's continuing involvement is a difficult issue. If you believe a common thread of American exceptionalism, that America is good and only wants what is best, bringing "democracy", "freedom" and "human rights" to the people of the world, when do we relent? If nothing is going right in Afghanistan and our presence only brings more militarization and more misery, when is it time to leave? Under the exceptionalism model, America can't lose, or surrender, it is simply too shameful to admit mistakes, too embarrassing to admit that the world's most advanced military can not achieve it's objectives in a country already devastated by years of war. Few choices remain except to stay the course.

If you believe another common thread of American discourse, Afghanistan is only getting what it deserves. Harboring the terrorist group responsible for 9/11 bears a heavy price tag. But ten long years have past. The Taliban are not defeated, and it is getting harder to define who, exactly, the Taliban are. If a farmer picks up a weapon to defend his land and his family, he is defined as Taliban. If a local worker in the CIA office in Kabul begins shooting employees, he is Taliban.

This is not necessarily true. Some tribes have resorted to violence against all outsiders. They do not differentiate between NATO forces, American forces and Taliban forces, they defend themselves against them all. As the situation deteriorates and the international community continues to defend its presence here with lies, distortions, and intransigence, hatred grows. Hopelessness grows. People with no ties to religious fundamentalism resort to violence and are then added to the list of Taliban. Hakim says with a smile, "Soon, everyone in Afghanistan will be labeled Taliban."

People in the U.S. are misled, fed a rote formula of religious fundamentalism fueling insurgency because they hate what we represent. The Afghan people do not hate what we represent, they hate what we do to their families, their community, their tribes, and their country. I do not blame them. Retaliation and retribution only assure us that future acts of violence are inevitable. When President Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize, he schooled us on why Martin Luther King was naive, why violence was a necessary component of fighting terrorism. He did not school us on how state violence creates terrorists and ensures continuing cycles of mayhem.

Now seems a good time for a joke. Ryan Crocker, the new ambassador to Afghanistan recommends more of the same. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal, he states, "The Taliban needs to feel more pain before you get to a real readiness to reconcile." The interviewer did not question this subtle ridiculousness; perhaps he was too busy laughing out loud.

So the current dynamic is a lose/lose situation for America as well as Afghanistan. American children continue to be deprived of basic health care, education, and food safety as money flows endlessly into the open pit of American militarism. American defense contractors continue to benefit. Our elected officials, proving they are "tough on terrorism" get re-elected. The Afghan people continue to suffer. Afghan children will be deprived of the same things as America's children, but to a degree 100 times worse. Hatred will continue to fester. Out of necessity, Afghans will become masters of comic timing.

America is not, and will not be safer for the misery imposed on Afghanistan. In closing, here is a final joke to diffuse the tension. It is still funny, though it has been repeated ad-infinitum by America's politicians and pundits: America is winning in Afghanistan.

10 Years in Afghanistan: **END THE WARS-Bring Our \$\$ Home**

1 PM RALLY

at Shemanski Park
(South Park Blocks at Salmon)

1:30 PM MARCH

2:30 PM FORUM

at First Unitarian Church
(SW 12th and Main)

Saturday
OCTOBER
15
2011



- **Self Determination for the Middle East**
- **End Militarism**
- **Money for Jobs and Health Care**
- **Protect Human and Civil Rights**

Cosponsors include: Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group • Portland Peaceful Response Coalition • Peace Action Committee of the First Unitarian Church • Alliance for Democracy-Portland Chapter • Metanoia Peace Community • East Timor Action Network/Portland • Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility • International Socialist Organization • Portland Jobs with Justice • KBOO Community Radio 90.7 FM • Women's International League for Peace and Freedom-Portland • Tikkun Olam Committee of P'nai Or • Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights (AUPHR) • Augustana Lutheran Church • Portland Area Rethinking Schools • and others.

Endorsers include: Little Light of Mine Friends Worship Group • RecruiterWatch PDX • Jewish Voice for Peace-Portland • Freedom Socialist Party • Women in Black-Portland • Students United for Palestinian Equal Rights (SUPER) • Portland Alliance (media endorser), No War Drum Corps • Oregon Wildlife Federation • Back 2 the WALL • and others.



For more information: Peace and Justice Works 503-236-3065 www.pjw.info

Moore-Love, Karla

From: Curt Bell [mckimbells@comcast.net]
Sent: Thursday, October 06, 2011 4:03 PM
To: Moore-Love, Karla
Subject: Re: Communications for Oct 12

Dear Ms. Moore-Love,

I would like to speak to the City Council on Wednesday Oct 12 about bringing our dollars home from wars and bases abroad. I think the City Council has an important role in this effort.

Curtis Bell Ph.D.
With First Unitarian Church Peace Action Committee.

1808 NW Aspen Ave.
Portland, OR 97210
503 227-0016

Request of Curt Bell to address Council regarding bringing our dollars home from wars and bases abroad (Communication)

OCT 12 2011

PASSED TO SECOND READING

Filed OCT 07 2011

LaVonne Griffin-Valade
Auditor of the City of Portland

By 

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Leonard		
Adams		