Afghani Students In Conversation with Students at Stony Brook University, New York

This conversation took place on Friday, the 24th of February, as the angry responses of the people of Afghanistan to the Quran burnings raged on.

It was a special event of Global Days of Listening. Students of Stony Brook University in New York had a heart-to-heart exchange of thoughts and feelings over food, music and other more serious topics, like the discussion below between Gino and the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers.

Gino Lo Bianco: What are your feelings and/or perceptions about American military involvement in your country; and, number two, what can we do as Americans, and as Global Citizens, to facilitate your quest for peace?

Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers: [Dr. Hakim translates the question; there are instant responses.] Dr. Hakim says, “That was a good question and we want to take some time understand and think about this and to thank you for giving us the opportunity to say what ordinary Afghans think. What ordinary Afghans think is not heard in mainstream media, so thank you for asking so we have the chance to tell you.”

Faiz: Faiz said that we are not happy and willing for the American military to be in Afghanistan. He said that the American military is partly here for its own economic interests. Not only are there ample natural resources in Afghanistan itself, Afghanistan serves as a transit point for resources from different parts of Central Asia, (various resources) including gas. Faiz thinks that the people of Afghanistan do not want to live under the rule of someone else, in the same way that no Americans would want to live under the rule of another country.

Abdulai: Abdulai says that he also does not want the Americans here:

In fact, it should be clear to all of humanity that war is not a solution to any of humanity’s problems anywhere in the world. Abdulai has said that the American military is here to control the region. And this, he said, can be clearly seen with the Strategic US-Afghanistan Partnership Agreement that is about to be signed.

Unfortunately, Americans are not aware of the fact that their government wants to stay in Afghanistan in joint military bases beyond 2024. And this is for the express purpose of control though the official American narrative is for ‘counter-terrorism’. Control must be seen in the light of Afghanistan’s neighboring countries, of which Afghanistan is a pawn in the game. Next to Afghanistan is Iran, Pakistan, China, Russia. And anyone can guess what strategic power interests the powers may have here.

Ali: Ali ended up by affirming that view that ordinary Afghans are tired of war. The American military is only adding to the war that Afghans are tired of. It doesn’t work.

The second question is also very important, and I will get the youth to answer the second question. [Hakim translates Faiz’s answer.] Dr. Hakim: “I will translate Faiz’s question (answer), and then get Abdulai’s and Ali’s answers, too.”

Faiz: Please use whatever tools you have available to nonviolently raise the correct awareness among your friends and in New York and in the rest of the United States. Use your Facebook, use Twitter. Use the on-line tools that you have to speak to others and to let others know what you have heard today. Our message needs to get out. There are thirty million Afghans who largely think this way but are not heard. So you could help us by delivering this voice with the tools that you have.
Abdulai: Abdulai is suggesting two other ways in which you could help the people of Afghanistan. The first way he had mentioned was to reach out to ordinary Afghans like us with your friendship. Be our friends. It is so important for ordinary people everywhere to befriend one another, and only then can peace come. We cannot find peace through an American military strategy. We can only find peace, Abdulai said, when we become Friends.

Abdulai also asks that it may be good for you if you could spend some time with the Occupy movement. We have been encouraged and excited by Occupy. Unfortunately, in Afghanistan, we do not have the space, nor the security, to occupy any physical space. What we can do is to occupy the airwaves like we are now, speaking to you. We encourage the Occupy (movement) because it deals with a root problem in Afghanistan and in the world that 1% of the Afghan leaders, of American leaders, control 99% of all of us. This needs to be addressed through conversations like this.

Faiz has earlier also mentioned that as part of our occupying the Afghan airwaves we have been conducting regular monthly programs called Global Days of Listening. If you would go to globaldaysoflistening.org, you can join us in occupying the Afghan airwaves in speaking to ordinary Afghan youth, and Iraqi youth, and Palestinian youth, South African, Pakistani, and other youth from different parts of the world, as part of a larger movement, to build relationships, listen to one another, and get the ground truths out, from person to ordinary person.

Thank you so much for that question.