

GREATER LANSING NETWORK AGAINST WAR & INJUSTICE

A MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION SEEKING TO END WAR AND PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH ADVOCACY, EDUCATION AND ACTION
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Negotiate for Peace or Wage Endless War Position on Afghanistan and Pakistan

The reason given by the U.S. government for entering into war with Afghanistan was that the U.S. was attacked on 9/11/01 by a miniscule subgroup of Al Qaeda militants. The proper response should have been to charge them under international law and abide by an international court's judgment, as has been the case with the perpetrators of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia. The chief advantage of this approach is the broad international recognition and support created by such legal judgments, support that is not created by the unilateral action of one powerful country. The measured response of a police action would not have led to the elaborate propaganda campaign that expanded the unilateral U.S. counterattack into a "war."

Instead, the U. S. response has generated enormous conflict, war without an end in sight, expanded hatred on both sides, and considerably more antagonism against the United States. Our government's fundamental error has been the belief that we can manage the conflict by force, a counter-productive belief sustained by the rhetoric of those intent on imposing U.S. hegemony on the region.

The same failed approach used in Iraq is currently being followed in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Even though Pakistan is an ally of the U.S., its present government calls for negotiation, not military force. It has rightly protested the U.S. unilateral bombing of its territories at a time when it is seeking to resolve the conflict with its own Taliban and Al Qaeda factions. While the U.S. government may not agree with everything the Pakistani government does in these negotiations, it is completely counterproductive to undermine their efforts.

We believe that there are no absolute or irreconcilable differences between people, and that all differences are better resolved through negotiation than through force. We believe that the current U.S. position vis-a-vis Muslim states or populations in opposition to the U.S. is to compel them to submit to our authority by force of arms, rather than to negotiate with us. That is a fundamentally flawed and failed strategy. We also believe that it is not necessary to resolve completely the differences between peoples who hold different beliefs; such differences will always be with us. Tolerance, compassion, and deep listening are powerful tools of diplomacy.

In sum, we believe that it is in the interest of the American people for our government to negotiate with those groups in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or anywhere else, who seek to attack our country. We do not believe that the use of force in these instances has been justified, and that its use has been counterproductive to peace. Our country has a choice: Negotiate for peace or wage endless war. The record on the latter is poor indeed. It is time to try the former in a serious way.

(Approved per discussion at 11-17-08 regular meeting)

