

# CASUALTIES OF ENDLESS WARS:

Lives, Compassion, The Economy, Privacy and the Environment (9/11 15 Years Later)

September 9,  
2016

In the decade and a half since September 11, 2001, the US has engaged in military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Syria and elsewhere. Xenophobia and Islamophobia are on the rise. No money is available for jobs, health care or other human needs while the Pentagon's budget is untouchable. Civil liberties are violated by government spying and unlawful detentions such as in Guantanamo. And the US military continues as an entity to be the world's #1 user of fossil fuels, contributing to climate change.

Americans remember the roughly 3000 people who died on 9/11 in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. But the US government took the nation's collective grief, amped up the fear of "terrorism," and involved itself in ongoing and expanding wars while passing laws which threaten the freedoms it claims to protect.



## LIVES LOST: WARS IN SEVEN COUNTRIES

**\*\*AFGHANISTAN\*\*** The first post-9/11 war, launched without a specific UN mandate, was the US bombing, invasion, and occupation of Afghanistan starting October 7, 2001. Afghanistan has been racked by violence for over 35 years beginning with the US and Soviet Union fighting for control from 1979 to 1989. Osama Bin Laden was a product of US efforts funding "Mujahideen" to fight the USSR. Although a new Afghan government was installed by the US, the Taliban and others have initiated guerilla attacks against international forces and the new regime. In 2009-10, President Obama increased the number of troops from 34,000 at the end of the Bush era to over 100,000. While Obama pledged to remove all combat troops by the end of 2016, about 9000 are still there— with 29,000 "contractors" supporting them (*Military Times* 8/17).

It is unknown how many Afghan civilians have died as a result of the invasion, but 1601 civilians were killed just in the first 6 months of 2016, with a more than 100% increase in deaths by airstrikes (*The Hill* 7/25). As of September 8, 2384 US troops and over 1000 from other countries had died in Afghanistan (icasualties.org).

**\*\*IRAQ\*\*** To justify the US-led March 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration asserted that Iraq supported terrorists and was part of the "War on Terror." However, Saddam Hussein provided no material support for Al Qaeda prior to 9/11 (Reuters 9/8/06) and President Bush himself conceded there was no connection between Iraq and 9/11. None of the hijackers was alleged to have been Iraqi. Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction.

Despite the "withdrawal" of US troops at the end of 2011, with the US war on the Islamic State (ISIS) starting in August 2014, US soldiers, Iraqi civilians and combatants continue to die. 4504 Americans have died in Iraq, so the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost the US more than twice the 2973 lives lost on September 11. After the initial invasion and resulting factional fighting, Iraq Body Count estimates at least 163,461 Iraqi civilians have died, based on verifiable news reports (www.iraqbodycount.org). The infrastructure in Iraq, devastated by the US' 1991 war and 13 years of economic sanctions, has not improved despite billions pumped in by American taxpayers. At least 4500 US troops are now in Iraq, mostly as so-called "advisors" to Iraq's fight against ISIS (Associated Press 7/11).

**\*\*SYRIA\*\*** About 6 weeks after the war on ISIS in Iraq, the US also launched an unauthorized air war on Syria. Although President Obama pledged "no boots on the ground." at least 250 special forces are in Syria (*Intercept* 4/29). The low estimate of civilian deaths from the US and its allies since September 2014 is 773 (Airwars.org/ABC News 7/29). Civilian casualties increased after US policy changed from a zero civilian goal to "accepting up to 10 civilian casualties in any action" (Airwars.org 8/8). No US troops have been reported to have died in Syria (yet) but the continuing war with no military authorization raises legal issues. US Army Captain Nathan Smith filed suit in May 2016 for deploying him to Kuwait as part of the war on ISIS, challenging President Obama's failure to seek authorization after the 90 days provided for troop deployments under the War Powers Act (*US News* 8/6). The Authorization for Use of Military Force passed in 2001 and used by the US to justify all seven current interventions, focused on Al Qaeda—which itself is fighting ISIS. The war in Syria is complicated by parallel interventions by Russia, also targeting ISIS but tending to favor the Assad regime, and by Turkey, which has been shelling Kurdish militias allied with the US (AFP 8/28).

**\*\*PAKISTAN\*\*** Under GW Bush, American unarmed aircraft (drones) dropped bombs on Pakistan's NW region (near Afghanistan) 45 times in 5 years. In his 8 years in office, President Obama has overseen 373 drone strikes (thebureauinvestigates.com). At minimum, 424 civilians have been killed. The strikes slowed down after Code Pink led an international delegation to investigate the aftermath of such bombings in 2012, and public pressure led to a pledged reworking of US drone policy. Despite Pakistani government and civilian protests, the drone strikes continue, most recently on May 21.

**\*\*YEMEN, SOMALIA\*\*** The US has conducted multiple air attacks on the countries of Yemen and Somalia, using drones, cruise missiles, and air-launched missiles. The US is also overtly supporting the Saudi Arabian government's intervention in the civil war in Yemen with military support, while continuing drone strikes amidst the chaos. At least 132 US drone strikes in Yemen have killed over 568 people (thebureauinvestigates.com), and on May 7, AFP reported that US military personnel were deployed inside the country. The US has also targeted people in Somalia alleged to be with Al Qaeda or Al Shabbab, with at least 30 drone strikes and 3 civilians killed, most recently on September 5. It has also been reported that US special forces are on the ground in Somalia (*Washington Post*, 5/6).

(more, over)

**\*\*LIBYA\*\*** Despite the limited mandate in UN Security Council Resolution 1973 allowing member nations to “*protect civilians*,” America’s 6-month war on that country in 2011 killed dozens of civilians, including members of the militias they were allegedly aiding. After Muammar Gadhafi was brutally killed by his own people, the country fell into chaos, with two separate governments vying for control. Under the guise of repelling an expansion of ISIS, the US began bombing Libya again in August 2016, declaring there was no foreseen end-point of the intervention (*Intercept* 8/1).

**ISRAEL/PALESTINE** Though many Americans say 9/11 happened because others “hate our freedoms,” most of the world realizes the attacks were in response to US foreign policy. Among the issues were the presence of troops in Saudi Arabia (since withdrawn) the sanctions killing Iraqi civilians (since lifted), and the ongoing oppression of Palestinians by Israel, with political and financial support from America. Yet the US continues to give over \$3.5 billion per year in military aid to Israel to support its brutal occupation that denies human rights, justice and freedom to the Palestinian population. The Gaza strip remains under military siege and has suffered 3 major attacks by Israel in the last 8 years. In the West Bank, Israel is rapidly expanding its settlement of Palestinian lands as it destroys more homes and threatens entire villages, but the US vetoes any attempts to condemn Israel at the UN. Unless the Israeli/Palestinian issue is resolved, the Middle East will likely never see peace.

## **THE LOSS OF COMPASSION, THE RISE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA AND ANTI-IMMIGRANT RHETORIC**

The “War on Terror” has made life more difficult for many Arabs, Muslims and immigrants in the US. In addition to increasingly blurred lines between law enforcement and immigration administration, cultural forces are leading to discrimination and unjustifiable detentions and deportations. A wave of anti-immigration sentiment, mostly aimed at undocumented Latin-Americans, has illogically connected 9/11 to the efforts of thousands of people to find work and support their families in countries whose economies are suffering from US economic policies like NAFTA.

## **THE ECONOMY: HOW MANY SCHOOLS/ROADS/HEALTH PLANS SPENT ON WAR?**

In 2013, a Brown University study estimated the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were over \$4 trillion (Reuters 3/14/13), and the war on ISIS has cost another \$8 billion (*The Hill* 7/28). In January, 2012 the City of Portland passed a resolution calling to bring the war dollars home. While Americans are being thrown out of foreclosed homes, losing jobs, having pensions taken away, and facing rocketing health care costs, it is time to bring the money back home and spend it here.

## **PRIVACY AND CIVIL LIBERTIES DISAPPEARING**

In the US, September 11 led to a climate of fear making it easy for laws to pass stripping citizens’ rights. The passage of the USA PATRIOT act in October, 2001 greatly expanded the power of law enforcement. The National Security Agency began conducting warrantless wiretaps on international calls. Every major city’s police force joined with the FBI in “Joint Terrorism Task Forces” (JTTFs). Though originally created through 1996 anti-terrorism laws, JTTFs became ubiquitous after 9/11. Portland removed its officers in 2006, but rejoined on a 3-2 vote in early 2015. Meanwhile, suspects brought to the US military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have been held for nearly fifteen years, and most have not been charged with any crime. Though President Obama pledged to close the prison, which mostly serves to bolster anti-American sentiment, he has been unable to do so, instead releasing most of the 779 prisoners so

that as of August 2016 only 61 remain, 20 of whom are eligible to be transferred out (NPR 8/16).

## **US MILITARY: WORST POLLUTER**

In October 2010, just 9 years into the “War on Terror,” Project Censored wrote “*the US military is responsible for the most egregious and widespread pollution of the planet*.” They cited author Sara Flounders who reported “*The Pentagon is the largest institutional user of petroleum products and energy, yet [they] have a blanket exemption in all international climate agreements*.” Project Censored said the military was consuming 320,000 barrels of oil a day, noting Oil Change International found “*The Iraq war was responsible for at least 141 million metric tons of carbon dioxide [emissions], more than 60 percent of all countries [combined]*.” The US flew 280,000 sorties in the “no-fly zones” in the 1990s (DailyKos 8/10/14), and by early 2012 had flown 663,000 more in Iraq and Afghanistan (Media Roots 3/26/12), with over 55,000 more in Iraq and Syria in the war against the Islamic State in just the first 18 months (Bloomberg News 3/16/16). With climate change endangering the planet, this alone is reason enough to stop the wars.



## **CONCLUSION**

As we remember September 11, let us move past the misleading language and self-censored media accounts and acknowledge the suffering of war. The life of every Iraqi, Afghan, Syrian, Pakistani, Somali, Yemeni and Libyan killed was just as important, and their grief and fear in the face of violence is every bit as real as what Americans felt on 9/11. Let’s pledge resistance to state-sanctioned murder in the name of “national security” and agree to support international law, human rights, and civil liberties. Let’s convert the US military economy to a peace economy, with money for health care, housing, a healthy environment and an educated citizenry that will never again allow its own government to conduct illegal and immoral wars.

(This flyer was modeled on PJW’s fact sheets from Sept. 2006 and Sept. 2011. It includes updated information.)

This flyer was prepared September 2016 by the  
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Meetings usually 2nd Mondays, 7 PM; next one is September 12.  
Also join PJW at the Friday Rallies on Sept 23 (Syria 2 years later) and  
Oct. 7 (Afghanistan 15 years later) 5 PM at SW Broadway and Yamhill!