

# 10 Reasons Why Women Should Oppose the “War on Terrorism”

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The “war on terrorism” focused the world’s attention on Afghan women. Their utter lack of basic human rights made it onto the radar screens of many who had never before given a thought to the condition of the women of Afghanistan. The brutality of the Taliban’s rule was captured for all to see in video footage of the public execution of a woman kneeling in a stadium. Horrifying images of women hanged or stoned for prostitution or adultery circulated on the Internet. For many in the U.S., the pale blue burkha became symbolic of the depths of gender oppression under fundamentalist rule.

But these images and stories, and the genuine concern they generated, were parlayed by Washington into a propaganda campaign designed to build support for the bombing of Afghanistan. The U.S. military was cast as the liberator of Afghan womanhood. Their “salvation” became the softer side of the war.

*Washington has depicted the U.S. military as the liberator of Afghan women.*

As a consequence, too many U.S. feminists have either been reluctant to speak out against the death and destruction rained down

upon ordinary Afghans or, yielding to missionary and imperial impulses, have supported the war.

Gender was and is an issue in the “war on terrorism” that should be directly addressed by anti-war activists. The humanity of the Palestinian people is called into question each time we are asked to believe that Palestinian mothers do not grieve the deaths of their martyred children. Muslim and Arab women in the U.S. face gender-specific forms of harassment. And African American women, Rep. Barbara Lee and Rep. Cynthia McKinney, have been the most consistent anti-war voices raised in Congress.

A gender analysis working group, convened by the Women of Color Resource Center, is looking at these and many other issues. The group produced thousands of postcards with the following text for the April 20th demonstrations:



1. “Smart wars” save the lives of U.S. soldiers while civilians—largely women and children—become “collateral damage.”
2. War and militarism subject women and girls to rape and sexual violence; the culture of aggression encourages domestic violence against women.
3. Weapons of mass destruction, produced and used by the U.S., poison the soil and sea, causing miscarriages, birth defects and cancers.
4. The “war on terrorism” gives other governments an excuse to strike out at political opponents, with disastrous consequences for women in war zones.
5. The “war on terrorism” is a cover for U.S. global domination, which impoverishes women worldwide.
6. When Arab, Muslim and immigrant men are locked up without cause and without charges, women, children and communities suffer.
7. A women’s rights agenda cannot be advanced while human rights and civil liberties are trampled.
8. U.S. war industries reap enormous profits, while programs that benefit women and girls—healthcare, education, welfare and childcare, for example—face budget cuts.
9. Bush’s war reinforces global racism, negatively impacting women of color worldwide.
10. The Pentagon cannot liberate Afghan women—or any other women.