



Out of Afghanistan Now!

The news media, in its typically shallow fashion, attribute the current popular outrage to the “inadvertent” burning of Korans in a trash pit at Bagram air base. For most pundits and politicians, history always begins the day before yesterday. But it’s more sensible to look at the Koran-burning as the last straw. Consider Bagram. The U.S. government has a prison there — sort of a Guantanamo East — where men are held indefinitely without due process. The detention center is [“worse than Guantanamo.”](#) writes Daphne Eviatar, an attorney for Human Rights First. Things have only gotten worse under Nobel Peace Prize-winner President Obama: “There are now 3,000 detainees in Bagram, up from 1,700 since June (!) and five times the amount there when Barack Obama took office,” writes John Glaser.



That’s far from the end of it. U.S. military units and special-operations forces have free rein to do as they wish. Afghan President Hamid Karzai, the U.S. government’s hand-picked figurehead who barely governs the capital, Kabul, has repeatedly beseeched Obama to stop the night raids on Afghan homes, but the raids do not stop. As Glenn Greenwald reminds us, former top American general Stanley McChrystal acknowledged that an [“amazing number”](#) of civilians have been shot dead at checkpoints. Added to the assaults on the ground are those from the air, which have taken many innocent lives. Obama insists that only “militants” are killed in the bombings, but we may infer from the U.S. record that a “militant” means anyone killed by American forces. That lexicon apparently also includes as its definition of “Taliban” anyone who objects to the U.S. occupation.

The American occupiers are not limited to mass murder and other disruptions of life. They have added much insult to injury besides the burning of Korans, such as urinating on corpses. Americans forget, but the Afghans do not.

Greenwald writes,

It’s comforting to believe that these violent protests and the obviously intense anti-American rage driving them is primarily about anger over the inadvertent burning of some religious books: that way, we can dismiss the rage as primitive and irrational and see the American targets as victims. But the Afghans themselves are making clear that this latest episode is but the trigger for — the latest symbol of — a pile of long-standing, underlying grievances about a decade-old, extremely violent foreign military presence in their country.

Defense [sic] Secretary Leon Panetta says U.S. combat forces could be removed in mid-2013, but



Written by [Sheldon Richman](#) on March 8, 2012

to the long-suffering Afghans that is surely too long to wait. They are sick of having foreigners run rampant in their country. Under similar circumstances Americans would be too, and the word “insurgency” would suddenly become expressed favorably.

The latest incident shows the bankruptcy of the American strategy. The stated plan is for U.S. forces to bring the Afghan security apparatus to the point where it, rather than the Americans, can do the heavy work of winning an unwinnable civil war. The theory requires trust between the forces — which by all signs is missing. After the Koran-burning, two NATO officers were shot at point-blank range by an Afghan security official inside the Afghan Ministry of the Interior. “For now ... much of the cooperation between U.S. advisers and their Afghan partners is on hold.... [I]t is not clear how U.S. troops will be able to reestablish trust with Afghan security forces,” the [Washington Post](#) reported.

But conditions were bad before the Koran burning. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Daniel L. Davis is only the latest source to report [“the absence of success on virtually every level.”](#) including rising violence and the incompetence and corruption of the Afghan government and forces trained by American personnel.

What makes this all so absurd is that it is to no good purpose whatsoever. Repeatedly we’re told that al-Qaeda has been reduced to insignificance, so even the rationalization for occupation is gone. The U.S. presence in Afghanistan has no bearing on American security. It’s just wanton violence.

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