

Joya Causes Uproar on the First Day of Parliament



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Among Afghanistan's legislators are some accused of human rights abuses and many are unhappy at the preponderance of such figures in parliament. Malalai Joya, known for her outburst against them at the constitutional convention, again denounced their presence in the National Assembly.

"I offer my condolences to the people of our country for the presence of warlords, drug lords and criminals [in Parliament]," Ms. Joya said at an impromptu news conference after the swearing-in ceremony. The people of Afghanistan have recently "escaped the Taliban cage but still they are trapped in the cage of those who are called warlords," she said.

Hers was the only angry voice of the day.
The New York Times, December 19, 2005

Malalai Joya said the cycle of violence in her country would not end until those who commit violence are punished, rather than being allowed to sit as members of parliament. But she was not optimistic that this would happen anytime soon:

"How can our people be hopeful that the parliament will arrange a way to put the war criminals of our country in international or national courts when some of the most famous criminals in the country are in parliament?"

Asia Times, December 21, 2005.

Malalai Joya is one of the most outspoken critics of the makeup of the new parliament, whose members include warlords, militia commanders and former Taliban officials. She said:

"I'll try to introduce legislation that will protect the rights of the oppressed people and safeguard women's rights... Those who came here under the name of democracy should not be given the chance to continue their crimes under the slogan of democracy... I will continue my struggle against warlords... especially against those parties who destroyed our country."

Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, December 20, 2005.

Malalai Joya has vowed to stand up against warlords elected to parliament:

"Our people are concerned that the election took place in an armed environment, and that is why our people and the international community should not have expected democratic elections, which didn't take place....

Those with money, power and backed by foreign countries came into parliament. Their presence pollutes our parliament as a legislative source. But...some real and true representatives of people also came into this parliament. But, unfortunately, they are in a minority."

Golnaz Esfandiari, *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, December 19, 2005.

Malalai Joya was the only discordant voice on December 19, 2005, at a very consensual ceremony [to open Afghanistan's new parliament].

Denouncing the presence of warlords in parliament, she asserted that "the men and women of Afghanistan are like pigeons who have been freed from Taliban cages, but whose wings have been cut off and who are in the claws of vampires who suck their blood."

She added that "most of those vampires are to be found in parliament."

Directly attacking the American godfather, she added:

"President Bush owes us an apology for supporting extremist warlords, the Northern Alliance criminals."

Le Monde, December 20, 2005.

A debate erupted over the potentially explosive issue of warlords sitting among the elected representatives.

Malalai Joya called for all of Afghanistan's human rights abusers and "criminal warlords" to be brought to justice. Delegates responded by pounding their fists on the tables to demand that she sit down. She refused, shouting that it was her right as an elected official to speak.

USA Today, December 20, 2005.

Source: Website, Defense Committee for Malalai Joya.

Joya's Goal as MP is to Expose the Sham Parliament

Sonali Kolhatkar: Why did you run for parliament?

Malalai Joya: Hundreds of people from Farah and other provinces insisted that I run. I was intending to decline because I believe parliament will never bring anything positive for the nation. But my supporters kept saying "Your voice at the loya jirga gave us hope that there is at least one who understands our suffering. Now we want you to be the voice of voiceless at parliament." I couldn't help but accept the honor to be the voice of my oppressed nation in a parliament dominated by criminal warlords.

I will feel satisfied if I succeed in exposing the real nature of the current parliament and informing the Afghan people from within the parliament that the criminals sitting there are making laws for the benefit of the rich, the drug traffickers, warlords and high-level bureaucrats, and against the aspirations of the down-trodden masses.

Kolhatkar: If the warlords are so unpopular, how is it that so many of them were elected to the parliament?

Joya: Afghanistan is still a country strangled by the hands of the Northern Alliance. These are fundamentalist bands notorious for their terrible crimes between 1992 and 1996. After 9/11, America and its allies helped these criminals occupy Kabul and dominate the entire country. In a country under such religious fascists, holding free and democratic



Burhanuddin Rabbani was the president of Afghanistan during the mujahedeen's fundamentalist regime (1992-1996). He was elected to parliament as an MP in 2005.

elections is out of the question. Elections in such conditions are widely rigged. It is unbelievable, but still a reality, that regarding the issue of multiple voting, Karzai himself openly justified it by saying "This is an exercise in democracy. Let them exercise it twice!"

The warlords have not been elected by the people but by the killing machine, political power, billions of dollars and the intimidation of fundamentalists supported by the U.S. and numerous NGOs. It was not a free election, so one

cannot conclude that people elected their killers as their representatives. It was a fraud and an unfair election process that made them MPs.

Kolhatkar: What is the U.S. position on warlords today?

Joya: As the U.S. administration revived the warlords in the first place, it continues to support and rely on them. The U.S., as before, is not bothered by which criminal band rules the country as long as it is obedient to Washington, no matter how cruel, corrupt and anti-democratic it is. Many in Afghanistan are of the opinion that America's highly-trumpeted "war against drugs

painful and disgraceful way. The U.S. is relying on the killers of tens of thousands of Kabul residents and allowing representatives of these killers to enter and dominate the parliament and important posts in the government.

Kolhatkar: How can you change the political status quo with so many warlords in parliament alongside you?

Joya: I think that such a claim would be too much for me, or any other pro-people MP. But, as I've promised to my people, I'll never get tired of unmasking the criminals in the parliament, government or judiciary.

I feel my presence in the parliament



Malalai Joya

"The criminals sitting there [in Parliament] are making laws for the benefit of the rich, the drug traffickers, warlords and high-level bureaucrats."

"America's highly-trumpeted 'war against drugs and terrorism,' and its campaign to 'promote democracy,' are bogus because the U.S. has forged a unity with the most infamous, anti-democratic, religious terrorists and drug-mafia forces in Afghanistan's history."

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The U.S. government has its own strategic agenda in our country. The U.S. ambassador and secretary of state have claimed that the U.S. will not repeat its past mistake of supporting fundamentalists. However, the U.S. is repeating that "mistake" in a much more

will lead to a small increase in political consciousness. If that does not happen, then I will definitely resign. I would like the world to know that the Afghan parliament is another instrument in the hand of fundamentalists to try to legitimate and perpetuate their bloody rule in the country.

Source: "If I Arise: Talking with Malalai Joya, Afghanistan's Youngest Revolutionary," *Clamor*, June 10, 2006. www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=10406