

The killing of Osama Bin Laden: Stop the War Coalition statement:

The killing of Osama bin Laden by US Special Forces in Pakistan has been hailed a turning point in the 'war on terror'. The assassination, it is claimed, will draw a line nearly 10 years after 9/11. But if the US really wants to draw a line under these wars it needs to adopt very different policies from those which it is now pursuing.

The US and other NATO forces must now withdraw all troops from Afghanistan. The capture or killing of bin Laden was a stated aim when the attack began in October 2001 -- 'wanted dead or alive' in the words of George Bush. Since that time, tens if not hundreds of thousands have died in Afghanistan, the Taliban have gained in strength, and the pro US government is one of the most corrupt in the world. There is no justification for the war.

The US and Britain should remind themselves of the grievances which bin Laden claimed in 2001: the presence of US troops in the Middle East; the treatment of the Palestinians; and the continued sanctions against Iraq. All of these grievances have worsened in the last ten years. There are now western troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, US bases all over the region, and an intervention including troops and airstrikes in Libya. The Palestinians suffer even more, and have been subject to aerial attack by Israel. Iraq suffers full scale occupation as a result of the war in 2003.

The war has been extended into Pakistan, not just with Special Forces operations such as the killing of bin Laden, but with drone attacks which have killed thousands of Pakistanis and created great instability in the country.

The US and its allies have followed a policy of backing dictators and despots across the Middle East. Only the uprisings of the peoples in these countries has in any way altered that policy, and even now, while waging war in Libya, the west turns a blind eye to the atrocities in Bahrain and the repression in Saudi Arabia.

The war against Libya is not about humanitarian intervention but about the western powers _ especially the former colonial powers in North Africa_ trying to regain control of the region. The airstrikes should stop immediately and all troops including Special Forces and advisers should be withdrawn.

These policies have not helped to end terrorism, but have made it more likely. Al Qaeda barely existed outside Afghanistan 10 years ago; now it is a presence in a number of Middle Eastern countries. The latest events will in all likelihood lead to more attacks by al Qaeda, including in Europe and the US. The only way to end terrorism is to change the policies which create space for it to flourish in the first place.