

BAPTIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP OF NORTH AMERICA:
DISAPPOINTED WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA'S AFGHANISTAN SURGE

As people of faith and followers of the one called the Prince of Peace, we are gravely disappointed in President Obama's decision to escalate the number of troops in Afghanistan. Already, too much blood has been shed and this decision can only lead to more loss of life. As the prophet Jeremiah said,

*"They dress the wound of my people
as though it were not serious.
'Peace, peace,' they say,
when there is no peace." -Jeremiah 6:14*

President Obama's address in the context of the West Point academy was a poignant and sobering reminder of the reality that many in the room will pay the price of their lives in this military surge. Further, as they lay down their own lives, they will lead those who have entered the armed forces with fewer discernable choices in society to sacrifice their aspirations for a long and fruitful life.

The past eight years of foreign military presence in Afghanistan have magnified Afghanistan as a fractured society that has been at war for many decades. The result of these wars dims the likelihood of a strong national government and a strong national army emerging. Peace and stability will only come when we draw emphasis away from a military victory and toward a negotiated truce and ceasefire. Many military experts agree that this war in Afghanistan is not winnable: our military presence is in itself destabilizing.

Although we are opposed to the war, we are cautiously encouraged by the President's deadline of July of 2011 to begin bringing the troops home. We are concerned the war could continue on much longer. The people of Afghanistan need re-assurance that the U.S. military commitment is not open-ended, and the leaders of Afghanistan likewise need this clear warning.

We continue to believe that a negotiated peace process with all the disparate groups and forces of Afghanistan is the better way to go. To listen to our leaders speak of "victory" in Afghanistan is empty of meaning. We cannot impose a Western-style democracy on a country with such limited structures of civil society. The fraudulent recent election illustrates this point.

We urge President Obama to remain firm in his intent and goal to begin dramatically drawing down the military option in 2011, and to begin immediately to escalate efforts to bring together a complicated but necessary negotiated peace to Afghanistan. We fear that after billions of dollars are wasted and many lives are lost, Afghanistan will remain in the same situation as today. We believe that a negotiated settlement with all Afghani factions is the only viable way, and we urge President Obama to begin immediately to

involve the broad international community in taking steps toward such a negotiated settlement.

We are also concerned that this military escalation will introduce even more instability to the government of Pakistan at a most inopportune time for this nuclear-power. These efforts will continue to build animosity and resentment throughout the region and forestall President Obama's sincere desire to reach out to Muslims outside the extremist expressions of Islam and advance their capacity to better represent Islam to the wider world.

We agree with President Obama: the country he most needs to re-build is his own. This military escalation will only delay our ability to address so many pressing human needs in the USA and the same reality could be said of other nations with military forces in Afghanistan. We urge all peacemakers in the United States to communicate with their representatives in Congress, and we invite all peacemakers throughout North America and around the world to join in prayers and action for peace in Afghanistan.

Adopted by the Board of Directors of the
Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America
11 December 2009

This statement has also been endorsed by the [Alliance of Baptists](#).