

A CALL FOR A JUST AND ENDURING PEACE IN

Afghanistan

FROM THE NATIONAL LEADERS COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

DECEMBER 2, 2009

The National Leaders Council of the American Ethical Union opposes President Obama's plan to dramatically increase the number of troops involved in the conflict in Afghanistan as unreasonable and unjustified. Increased military operations will result in increased deaths of both civilians and armed forces. Further, means of force will not solve the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan. It is the wrong means aimed at the wrong enemy.

The true enemy in Afghanistan, as in so many places, is ignorance coupled with economic deprivation, which often leads to desperation, fanaticism, and terrorism. When employed by the likes of Al-Qaida, this constitutes a real threat to open, democratic nations throughout the world. We recognize the legitimate right of nations so threatened to respond directly to the perpetrators of terrorism.

However, the only way to break the cycle and defeat terrorism is through a respectful relationship with the Afghan people, one aimed at providing the basic requirements for human flourishing—water, food, shelter, education, and a reason to choose life over death.

The needs, wishes, and well-being of the Afghan people must be at the center of rebuilding Afghanistan. A negotiated solution is necessary, one that includes all groups involved in the conflict. A lasting peace in the region can only come from the participation of all parties that legitimately represent the interests of their constituents, including Pakistan where Al-Qaida has taken refuge.

We therefore call upon the Afghanistan and Pakistan heads of state to enlist the help of The United Nations in taking the lead in the reconstruction of Afghanistan through a collaborative process with the Afghan people and all other interested and affected regional parties, and we call upon the United States and its NATO allies to fully fund the initiative.