

US Penalizing Afghans for a Crime They Didn't Commit

-By Saloni Mishra



Image Source: The Week

In a drastically unfair step, the US has frozen \$10 billion worth of Afghanistan's central bank assets, which has further aggravated the acute economic crisis in the war-torn country. In the decree, the Biden administration has ordered the distribution of 3.5 billion dollars from the assets as damage to the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

It is a well-known fact no Afghan citizens, planes or territory were involved in the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. Rather than compensating Afghans for the 20-year old brutal US occupation that killed more than 1,00,000 and arrested, injured, displaced millions of Afghans, it is stealing from a crisis-ridden country to satisfy its ulterior motives. It's important to understand that the money frozen and transferred by the US administration belonged to the internationally accepted Afghan government formed after the US invasion of Afghanistan. Moreover, those funds include revenues from exports and aid assistance provided by donor countries. It's not money

that was earned or ever held by the Taliban. In short, this money belonged to the Afghan people, not the Taliban.

The families of the victims of the 9/11 attacks have not received compensation from the countries of any of the actual hijackers. The belief that the people of Afghanistan were ever accountable for what the Taliban did in connection to 9/11 is far removed from reality. Afghans didn't elect the Taliban; the Taliban seized power after a bloody civil war and oppressed and killed Afghans to hold on to power. Any consequences from the relationship they forged with terrorist organizations like al Qaeda is the Taliban's to bear alone. It is certainly not a debt owed by the Afghan people who were victims of the Taliban.

The families of the 9/11 victims deserve to be compensated, and the same has been accomplished since they have already received billions from the U.S. government and numerous charities. However, strangely they have filed separate lawsuits in U.S. courts which have given rise to judgments against an array of individuals and groups across the Middle East who are ideological enemies and employ different strategies, including the Taliban, Hezbollah, Iran and

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its supreme leader, the ayatollah and the executed former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein. It's hard to imagine all these entities being responsible for or playing a role in 9/11, which raises the concern that these judgments against those entities are just political theatre. The Biden administration's decision to set aside Afghan money to potentially pay 9/11 families reeks of political theatre, given that the courts have not found in favour of the families. Not to mention the ruling against the Taliban was in large part a default judgment and not a trial that determined the Taliban's precise role in those heinous terrorist attacks. One of the most bizarre justifications for Afghan money being

distributed to 9/11 families came from Andrew Maloney, an attorney for one of the families, who told the BBC that the Afghan people did not fight the Taliban hard enough to prevent their seizure of power.

This financial punishment comes as the UN says 1 million Afghan children could die from starvation or cold this winter. Twenty-four million Afghans are facing acute hunger, and 8.7 million are facing famine, a crisis believed to be a result of a crescendo of disasters following the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, the collapse of its government and the return of the Taliban to power. The Taliban's return resulted in the overnight freezing of diplomatic recognition and financial assistance. Children are freezing,

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families are starving, and there is unimaginable poverty riddling Afghanistan. There has been irreparable damage caused to the people of Afghanistan due to the 20 years of a disastrous war waged by the US forces that brought neither prosperity nor peace to the country. It is no secret that the Taliban are responsible for their fair share of the

destruction brought to the country. However, it is clear that the Afghan people aren't responsible for 9/11 and nor do they deserve the punishment for the same.

The US had premised its intervention in Afghanistan to be a saviour of Afghan people and renders them devoid of all agency and furthers a problematic discourse dangerously close to the 'natives need to be saved by western powers'. Incidents like these lay bare US imperialism's grotesque face, which is the primary force driving their intervention. Therefore, there is an urgent need to resist this unfortunate development and expose US's imperialist tendencies.

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