

## Malalai Joya in Victoria

Story & photos by Theresa Wolfwood

Often called “the bravest woman in Afghanistan”, Malalai Joya brought her truth to Canada recently. Malalai – named for a famous Afghan heroine- is a popular Afghan MP whose truth about the corruption and criminals in the Afghanistan government has endangered her life and so enraged the government that it has expelled her from parliament- her elected right. Because of assault and death threats- she has survived four assassination attempts- she now has fulltime body guards and seldom sleeps in the same house for two nights running. Nothing has silenced her; she continues to condemn the warlords and drug criminals in the government – a government that the Canada kills and dies for. Afghanistan has become the world’s leading source of opium for heroin & the big four dealers are in government.



She says, *"They will kill me but they will not kill my voice, because it will be the voice of all Afghan women. You can cut the flower, but you cannot stop the coming of spring."*

She wants the world, in particular the NATO countries whose armed forces support this government, to know the result of their efforts. She says that Afghans want liberation, not occupation.

*"We are hostages of the USA-backed government."*

She is the director of the "Organisation of Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities" (OPAWC), one of the groups helping women and children with health and education which does not receive any of the alleged development aid we are sending to Afghanistan. OPAWC recently had to close an orphan’s facility because of lack of funds. This is a continuation of her work which began when she was a teenager. Raised by loving and carrying parents who fled to Pakistan in 1982; Malalai started teaching other students when she was eighteen; her parents believed strongly that girls should be educated and she inherited their sense of responsibility.

Her frail slight appearance and sad eyes belie her strength and determination to seek liberation for Afghanistan and the rights of women and children. She says women are suffering more now than ever – it is a lie that this war has ever helped liberate women. Female suicide are higher than before – for many women it is the only option when they are faced with the dangers of kidnapping, rape, the sex trade and marriage – 80% of which are forced on girls without their consent. Many other women who have spoken out in public have been murdered; widows feel hopeless and commit suicide. Rapists, murderers, kidnappers are never charged.

About the constant danger she lives in, she quotes the Persian writer, Samad Behrangi who wrote, *"Once death is inevitable, it becomes unimportant. What is important is the effect my life, or my death for that matter, will have on others."*

She told us that the USA controlled war, supposedly on ‘terror’ has driven Afghans from the frying pan into the fire - from the control of the Taliban to control by the Northern warlords, who are even worse - just as fundamentalist and misogynist. Many resist, many are killed or beaten, but still there is popular support for democracy in spite of the danger, demonstrations are common, but ruthlessly suppressed (we never hear about them).

Calling on Canadians to act and support democracy and rights in Afghanistan, she told us, *"The silence of the good is worse than the actions of the bad."*

We can end our support of USA and its use of her country as a base for controlling Asia; call on the UN to stop arms sales top both sides. Act in solidarity with people’s organizations and democratic parties; Call on the international community to depose the Northern Alliance.



*Malalai Joya on right in Victoria*

Let us speak out & work to elect a government that will make Canada a truly global PEACE MAKER. Organize and demonstrate – we are not likely to be killed for it.

Tell PM Stephen Harper [pm@pm/parl.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm/parl.gc.ca) to show that Canada really supports women's rights in Afghanistan by publicly condemning its government & withdrawing all our support for it. Write to all MPs & the media.

**Send support & copies of your letters to [mj@malalaijoya.com](mailto:mj@malalaijoya.com)**

*VPIRG cosponsored Malalai Joya's events in Victoria*