

Malalai Joya's speech in the Giglio D'oro award ceremony

July 23, 2007 - Florence

Dear friends, respected members of The Comune di Firenze,

I am short of words to express my thanks, gratitude and heartfelt regards for awarding me with the "Giglio D'oro" recognition. I am honoured to receive the award on behalf of the suffering Afghan women and men. It has a really huge moral value to me and puts extra responsibilities and obligations on my shoulders to fight against injustices and brutal fundamentalists in my country. By awarding me, you are giving a helping hand to the anti-fundamentalist and pro-democracy movement of Afghan people. Therefore I convey the sincere and deep thanks and regards of all Afghan women to you and through you to the great people of Italy. I am deeply impressed by the degree of support and sympathies I've felt from my beloved Italian supporters in the past few years.

Your encouragement and solidarity with my efforts for a free, democratic and secular Afghanistan, even further motivate me to fight with higher determination and steadfastness against enemies of humanity in my ill-fated country, even if it will require me to sacrifice my life for it. As the famous words go "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

Respected friends,

I belong to a land of tragedies called Afghanistan which has been a playground for world powers in the past 25 years, Afghan people and especially women have been the prime victims throughout these bloody years.

After 9/11, the Bush administration bombed Afghanistan to topple the Taliban, and a ray of hope was alight in the hearts of our people to give a sigh of relief, but the hope was soon crushed when the US and allies painted the Northern Alliance warlords with the mask of democracy and brought them to power, the same bands were installed as policy-makers who were only a few years back called "the bandit gangs" by UN especial envoy Mahmoud Mestri.

It is due to the shameful policies of the US and allies that unfortunately today Afghanistan is ranked in top most unstable countries in the world and there has been no fundamental change in the plight of Afghan people and the entire nation is still living under the shadow of guns and warlordism, even the recent raise of violence and insurgency by the brutal Taliban is the negative outcome of such circumstances.

For speaking the truth against warlords, I am receiving constant death threats, but when they could not silent me by threats, assassination attempts and any kind of abuses, they finally kicked me out of the parliament. But I am happy about that, it shows that I have been successful in my mission to uncover the mask of some criminal and dark-minded elements like Sayyaf, Rabbani, Qannoni, Gulabzoy, Ulumi, Haji Almas, Haji Farid, Mohaqiq, Kazimi, Farooqi and many other such murderers.

For the US government, the brutal warlords are not terrorists, as their acts of terrorism are not against US interests; therefore the US has joined hands with them and installed the bloody enemies of our nation in the key positions in the Afghan government.

It is due to the above facts that Afghan people and particularly women are still going through a painful catastrophe. Human rights situation is deplorable and crime against women is increasing. It is suffice to say that the number of suicide cases among Afghan women has never been so high as it is today. As no one hears their hurting cry, they have no other option but to resort to self-immolation.

Afghanistan has received billions of \$ in aid in the past few years but ordinary people were not benefited from it and still the gross majority of our people are in grip of poverty and destitution but in contrary a handful of warlords, NGOs, UN workers etc. are filling their pockets with this money.

In the recent conference on justice in Afghanistan held in Rome, around 370 million US \$ aid was promised, but I am sure it will even further widen the gap between poor and rich. When our judicial system is infected with the virus of fundamentalism and warlordism, we can't expect at all to see any justice in Afghanistan. Sarwar Danish, the justice minister, who was part of the Afghan delegation in the conference, himself, is a warlord and member of a pro-Iran criminal party. And Jabar Sabet, the attorney general is a dark-minded collaborator who has been member of the terrorist band of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Will such conferences help Afghan people if the key posts are in the hands of such enemies of our people?

Another stigma on the forehead of the US and their allies is that Afghanistan under the US occupation has become the world's largest opium producer. Even world media confirm that warlords and high ranking people inside Mr. Karzai cabinet are involved in the dirty business.

Dear Friends,

Afghan people will never experience peace, stability, liberation and democracy, until the warlords are disarmed and both the pro-US and anti-US terrorists are removed from the political scene of Afghanistan. And this is the responsibility of the Afghan people to accomplish this goal.

Liberation should be achieved in a country by the people themselves, we can never expect from a foreign country to donate us peace and freedom on gunpoint. The ongoing developments and the fake democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq prove this concrete fact.

The US "war on terrorism" has some hidden objectives behind it rather than real concern about the fate of our people as they claim. This war brought no tangible positive result to the people of Afghanistan and Iraq but killing of tens of thousands of innocent people in both countries.

Respected friends, these were only a few of the disastrous developments in my bleeding country, but I am happy that despite the rule of the criminal fundamentalists of any kind, the justice-loving and democratic-minded forces and individuals of Afghanistan are fighting against this situation.

I would like to convey the best wishes and thanks of Afghan people to the great and freedom-loving people of Italy for their help and solidarity with their Afghan sisters and brothers. We need your support and unity to break the fetters of slavery in our land.

I am honoured that my voice has become the voice of my oppressed and unfortunate people and that for this reason they are supporting me. I am well aware of the hardships, challenges, and death, but nothing will stop me from telling the truth. And by awarding me the "Giglio D'oro" you acknowledge my fight against fundamentalism and for democracy, so in return I announce from your tribune that I will not stop for a moment from telling the truth in the face of death threats and intimidations.

As Martin Luther King said "I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant."

Heartfelt thanks once again for giving me the prestigious prize.

Malalai Joya

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