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BY EVE OTTENBERG

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Starving a People, Committing a Genocide: Biden's Sanctions on Afghanistan



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When the United States stole \$7 billion from Afghanistan on February 11, that was no mere crime of robbery. It was a war crime and a crime against humanity that condemns

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possibly millions of Afghans to starvation. In short, prelude to genocide. Biden prevaricates about his excuse for this outright theft of Afghan funds, namely compensating the 9/11 victims. The Afghan government didn't kill their loved ones, indeed back in 2001 the Taliban offered to turn the al Qaeda culprits over to Washington. The U.S. refused the offer and invaded instead.

Biden's shocking action makes all Americans complicit in sickening atrocities. According to UNICEF, "more than 23 million Afghans face acute hunger, including 9 million who are nearly famished." By the middle of this year, 97 percent of Afghans will be in poverty, the UN estimates. To say these people need every penny of their \$7 billion is an understatement. To say those who steal half of it from them are monsters is the only moral assessment of such larceny. (The other half will supposedly be returned to them at some unspecified future date.) Biden has done highway robbers one better: "Your money AND your life" is the new American message, delivered in ringing tones of mendacious self-righteousness.

This particular heist equals roughly 40 percent of the Afghan economy and approximately 14 months of Afghan imports, according to Mark Weisbrot in the February 4 Sacramento Bee. But Biden earlier slapped other sanctions on the country, as a parting gift when U.S. troops finally left after 20 years of wrecking the place. Overall Biden's sanctions mean "more people will die...over the next year than the number who died in 20 years of war," Weisbrot wrote in the March 15 CounterPunch. That's because Biden's gratuitous sanctions kill funding for the Afghan government along with money for desperately needed food imports. So between the multi-decade U.S. war on this poor nation, drought, covid and frozen currency reserves – frozen by the Biden administration, just to be clear – it's no wonder millions of pauperized Afghans hover over the abyss of starvation.

Thus Biden cancelled out the good he did by yanking U.S. troops out of Afghanistan. The military withdrew, but the U.S. president opened the door to famine. And that killer walked right in. This entirely man-made catastrophe could be averted, of course. Lift the sanctions. Give Afghanistan back all of its money and lives will be saved. Don't and lots of people will die.

Clare Daly, MEP from Dublin summed it up best in a March 8 speech: "There's no doubt about it, we're living in times where...the lives of innocent civilians are sacrificed in the wars of their masters. Yes in Ukraine, but not only. Since the last plenary tens of thousands of Afghani citizens have been forced to flee in search of food and safety, five million children face famine, an agonizing and painful death, a five hundred percent

increase in child marriages and children being sold just so they can survive, and not a mention of it, not here, not anywhere, no wall-to-wall TV coverage, no emergency humanitarian response, no special plenaries, not even a mention in this plenary, no Afghani delegations and no statements. My God, they must be wondering what makes their humanitarian crisis so unimportant. Is it the color of their skin, is it that they're not white? They're not European? That their problems come from a U.S. gun or a U.S. invasion? Is it that the decision to rob their country's wealth was taken by a despotic U.S. president rather than a Russian one? Because my God, all wars are evil, and all victims deserve support and until we get on that page, we have no credibility whatsoever."

What if Russia or China engaged in such murderous chicanery? Well, Russians and Ukrainians are killing each other right now, but the projected Afghan starvation death toll beats anything they've come up with so far. And though Biden's actions put Chinese treatment of the Uyghurs to shame – after all, their deaths are merely suspected, whereas Afghan deaths in the hundreds of thousands are a certainty if the U.S. pursues its insane cruelty – don't expect furious denunciations of the sort regularly leveled at Beijing from the corporate media. No. Our press tiptoes around our government's culpability. But that's to be expected from our media, aka Washington's propaganda megaphone, once known as a proud free press. Free no longer. The only freedom of thought lies in the occasional unexpected investigative report or in the margins of independent media.

One exception was a March 5 article in the Guardian by Selay Ghaffar. "Across the country, five million children are on the brink of famine. Many young people are in despair; suicide is on the rise," Ghaffar writes and then laments the soaring price of wheat due to the Ukraine war. This rise in cost means more people will starve. Part of the reason is that during the 20-year U.S. occupation, the country was "made into a dependency, relying on flows of humanitarian aid." Biden "has refused responsibility for America's intervention in our country."

The lesson of the U.S. defeat in Afghanistan and the promptly ensuing sanctions is damned if you do and damned if you don't. Any country Washington attacks has a Solomon's choice: surrender or fight and win and then face Washington's global financial fury and the mass destitution it engenders. That's how the empire works. It's the sorest loser on the globe. Defeated, it exacts an excruciating revenge.

If the geniuses in Washington think they can win the propaganda war on Afghanistan, they better think again. Too many people will die to be concealed. Many cloistered Americans who consider their country blameless may not know about the Washington-inflicted mass

death, but the rest of the world sure does. Just look at the front page of China's Global Times back on February 23. It featured Afghanistan's Washington-imposed agony, with a petition demanding the U.S. return money to Afghans. And that's not the only international headline to point out Washington's brutality. As corpses pile up, the appalling U.S. starvation of Afghans inevitably becomes as widely known as its aid to the slaughter in Yemen. But the callous sociopaths who inflict this policy on an entire nation seem scarcely to notice.

According to Vox back on January 22, before the August fall of Kabul to the Taliban, the country "relied heavily on foreign aid; after the Taliban takeover, that influx of cash ceased...In December the World Food Program found that 98 percent of Afghans aren't getting enough to eat." Afghan famine has one culprit: "The U.S. decision to halt aid to the country and freeze billions in Afghan government funds."

One can only hope some major power, like maybe China, comes to the rescue. China is generally careful about illegal U.S. sanctions, but it has cordial relations with the Afghan government and wants to include the country in its Belt and Road Initiative. Perhaps China could coordinate with the UN to put some food on Afghan tables – not too much, of course, because that would offend the omnipotent nitwits in the U.S. government. But maybe just enough to save some lives.

Eve Ottenberg is a novelist and journalist. Her latest book is *Hope Deferred*. She can be reached at her [website](#).

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