

An open letter to all those opposed to the Rally for the Pan-Canadian Day of Action Against the War in Afghanistan

To all those opposed to the Pan Canadian Day of Action Against the War in Afghanistan,

On October 27, there is going to be a rally to mark the Pan-Canadian Day of Action Against the War in Afghanistan. The KW march and rally are organized by a community activist group called Anti-War@Laurier (AW@L). We believe that the war in Afghanistan is unjust, immoral, misguided and inherently destructive; we believe that peace cannot exist at gunpoint.

This Saturday, we are going to be marching from the corner of Erb & Caroline to Veteran's Green on University. We have chosen this location because we believe it is the most meaningful place that a statement about the unethical nature of *this* war in Afghanistan can be made. In fact, we believe strongly that the racist war in Afghanistan is what is desecrating the honour and memory of our veterans. Historically, Canadian forces have fought alongside our British allies against Nazism in WW2 and against rampant Nationalism in WW1. The soldiers who fought in those wars made the greatest sacrifices a young patriot could ever make: they all sacrificed a piece of their souls when they agreed to pick up arms to defend their Nation—a most noble sacrifice, and thousands upon thousands also sacrificed their lives; their sacrifices will never be forgotten.

At AW@L, we are somewhat shocked that so many people see our anti-war message as being a message of disrespect, and we apologize for this misunderstanding. Our message with regard to veterans is this: In order to preserve the honoured and exalted legacy of our veterans and armed forces, we must end the war in Afghanistan, we must cease to be involved in the racist American project of global military dominance, and we must engage in our role as peacekeepers, not as occupiers. We will be holding a moment of silence at our rally to commemorate the sacrifices of our soldiers who have fought and died for our country, as well as for all victims of war.

And, while we believe that the war in Afghanistan is a war of occupation, we do not judge the soldiers as individuals in any negative light. We believe that the vast majority of our troops are in Afghanistan because they believe that the mission there is one for freedom, democracy and justice. But we also believe that they have been lied to and misled by the Canadian government and its military command. We believe that the only way we can truly support our troops is to bring them home, and to allow these fine young patriots to no longer be engaged in the occupation of a foreign country. The war in Afghanistan is no more legitimate than the war in Iraq, and both are equally a part of the American empire project—American officials corroborate this position; it is only the Canadian government and the people that they have lied to who believe that the war in Afghanistan is inherently more just and moral than the war in Iraq.

It cannot be stressed enough that this rally is not a protest against our soldiers, past or present. It is a rally to draw attention to the fact that the War in Afghanistan does not fit into Canada's conception of the role of our military. It seems that both AW@L and those who oppose the rally are both in favour of preserving the honour of our veterans. We believe that the best way to do that is to send a message that we refuse to allow our government to use the highly regarded reputation of our country, our military, and our soldiers and veterans to fight wars that are in the interest of American global dominance. It is not an anti-war demonstration that desecrates the honour of our veterans. Rather, it is unethical and racist wars that will taint the memory of their noble legacy.

AW@L, as a community group and as a chapter of the RAN (www.RAN.org) has formally committed itself to principles of nonviolence. We are sworn not to engage in any acts of violence, and that definitely includes violence against property. As the organizers of this rally, we are formally sworn to uphold that nonviolent principle, and this means that we can make our solemnest promise that we will in no way cause or allow any vandalism whatsoever to occur at Saturday's rally; we too wish to respect the sacredness of our veteran's sacrifice, and of course, protecting the memorial that has been dedicated to them is part of that commitment.

We ask that all of those who have expressed opposition to the location of this rally consider our perspective, and we sincerely hope that you will join us in rallying for Canada to honour our veterans' legacy by refusing to send soldiers to occupy other nations, that we support our troops by bringing them home, and that we get out of Afghanistan now, not in 2011. Stop the killing; make peace not war.

-Anti-War@Laurier (AW@L),