

Ancient Afghan City of Mes Aynak: Neoliberal Policies Threaten 5000 Years of Bronze-age History

Undermine Rights of Afghans to their Lands

By [Global Research News](#)

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by Afghans for Peace

In 2001, the world watched in horror as the Taliban destroyed the historic statues of Bamiyan- 5th century statues that were carved into the cliffs of the Bamiyan valley and originally decorated with gold and jewels. As the US was preparing to war with Afghanistan, footage of the destruction was broadcast to the world to rally support for the invasion, the overthrow of the Taliban, and installment of a proxy government that would serve US interests.



Giant Buddha statue carved into the cliffs of the Bamiyan Valley were destroyed in 2001 by the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Some of the most disturbing aspects of these interests have been outlined in the now infamous [Project for a New American Century](#)- described by neoconservatives such as Donald Rumsfeld, Zalmay Khalilzad, Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz, as “preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles” using military force all across the world. At the heart of this project is the need to control resources, not only for US sale and consumption, but also from access to these resources by regimes perceived as threats to US dominance, such as China and Russia. The plan is ambitious, as it calls for regime changes in dozens of states, the creation of new states and the partition and shift of borders of existing states to create a geopolitical profile favorable to American political and economic control.

Now, 11 years after the US invasion of Afghanistan and the Taliban destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, capitalist war and its direct nexus to the loss of culture and history is once again illustrated in Afghanistan. The pending casualties are again World history and culture, but with several bold twists this time around including: the environment, Afghan landowner’s claims to their lands, and the little, if any, faith that Afghans may have in the notoriously malfeasant US-backed Karzai regime.

The battleground is [Mes Aynak](#), an ancient Buddhist city built about 4600 years ago atop a rich copper deposit in Logar, Afghanistan. Discovered in the 1960s, Archaeologists consider it to be “[one of the most intriguing ancient mining sites in Central Asia, if not the world](#)”.

Mes Aynak is now scheduled for destruction in December 2012 in order to extract its copper

deposits, following an agreement between the Afghan Government and a Chinese mining consortium, comprised of China Metallurgical Group and Jianxi Copper Co.



2600-year old Buddhist Statues discovered at Mes Aynak

It includes statues of [Prince Siddhartha](#), a Stupa or a monastery, coins, glass, tools, manuscripts related to the presence of Alexander the (not-so) Great's troops, several separate monasteries and a commercial area. Older historic remains dating back to more than 5000 years are also at the site and possibly even more ancient Bronze Age artifacts dating as far back as 5600 years ago. It is a reminder of the diverse interactions and influences that various civilizations have had on Afghanistan's culture, and the identity of its people. Afghan children learn about the richness of their history through places like this. What will we teach our children and their children when greedy opportunists destroy places and things that link them to their past and identity for personal profits?

Proponents of the mining project claim that the venture will [benefit](#) Afghans in terms of job creation and trade. However, in light of the government's record of 11 years of [theft](#), [nepotism](#), [fraud](#) and misappropriation, such claims could only be chalked up to one of two things: either deliberate misinformation on the part of government officials that help themselves to royalties instead of depositing them in the public purse; or naivety on the part of some who are not fully aware of the extent of [government corruption in the current regime](#), highlighted by such startling realities as [Afghan money cushioning a housing downturn in Dubai](#) with wealthy Afghans with friends in high places rushing for the exits prior to a major coalition troop wind-down.

Despite a campaign targeting local villagers living on the site where enticements such as improved housing and access to education, many locals understand the [dire consequences](#) very well. Local villagers, moved out of their homes 3 years ago and promised improved permanent housing, are still living in temporary homes without running water and electricity. They feel that they were tricked by the government and they have now become fiercely opposed to the project. Indeed, the myth that the mining project will create jobs for Afghans is shattered when one considers that workers from China have already been brought to the mining site and are living in what amounts to a small town protected by a wall and a 1500-man army paid for by the mining consortium.



Structure unearthed as part of Ancient Buddhist Complex at Mes Aynak

To date, the consortium has not conducted an environmental impact assessment to gauge the pending environmental harm associated with mining projects and appropriate controls and mitigation strategies (if it has conducted an assessment, it has yet to make the results publicly available). This will ensure that the soil and waterways that serve more than 3 million people in the area will remain contaminated for decades into the future in a region where farmers have been already struggling to overcome the challenges of drought over the past decades. Afghans will pay for cost and effort to clean up the mess that will be left behind long after the consortium leaves- a cost will be too high in relation to the little benefit that ordinary local Afghans are poised to gain.

The current government's policies on the country's natural resources are in place not to

serve Afghans, but wealthy foreign investors and corrupt officials. Sadly, archaeologically-significant sites are no more safe with the current Western backed regime's neo-liberal policies than they were under the Taliban.

Please help spread the word about this pending atrocity by signing your name to a petition available at <http://www.change.org/en-CA/petitions/president-hamid-karzai-prevent-destruction-of-ancient-site-of-mes-aynak-the-environmental-damage-3#> .

Afghans for Peace is planning on holding worldwide protests (Date TBD) in late November to stop the pending destruction. Check for updates on AfghansForPeace.Org, Facebook.com/AfghansForPeace and <http://www.facebook.com/AfghansforPeace/events?ref=ts#!/events/425858374142617/>

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