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AMY GOODMAN: We return to Kathy Kelly. Kathy Kelly, a leading peace activist in this country, has just returned from Afghanistan. She is the co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, speaking to us from Chicago. Kathy, what do you think, having just returned from Afghanistan, needs to happen there now?

KATHY KELLY: I think it's important that people reinterpret the understanding of security. The United States continually pours funding into the Afghan National Police force, into these Afghan National Security Forces, into forces that will secure the TAPI pipeline, for instance, and the Afghan Local Police, the Arbakai. And it's as though the only kind of security is that which comes from one group having heavier arms and more weapons and ammunition and so-called training than another. But what about health security and food security? And what about the fact that it's claimed by numerous human rights groups that children in Afghanistan are starving to death at the rate of 250 per day, according to some?

The United States has, I think, done its best to secure the potential for a roadway, the pipeline, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline, 450 bases that might be maintained, huge prisons. They're still spending \$100 million on construction of a new prison near the Bagram Air Force Base. And meanwhile, the conditions in Afghanistan are deplorable. People have endured a very harsh winter, as *Democracy Now!* has covered several times. And the rage that people understandably feel when \$2 billion is being spent per week on maintaining an occupation, while people within Afghanistan are desperate just to try to find food to feed their families, it's something that all of the surveillance and the analysis that the United States studies simply won't understand.

I mean, the RAND Corporation has said that even though there are already 65,000 to 70,000 analysts poring over the surveillance supplied by drones that fly over Afghanistan, it would take 100,000 analysts to understand patterns of life in Afghanistan. Well, that must sound very absurd to people living within Afghanistan. When is the United States going to understand the rage and the antagonism felt by civilians who have borne year after year after year of attacks, unprovoked and uncaused attacks against civilians, as the United States has used its

occupation to try to dictate the future of people in Afghanistan?

AMY GOODMAN: On CBS's *Face the Nation* Sunday, Republican presidential contender Newt Gingrich responded to the shootings this weekend in Afghanistan.

NEWT GINGRICH: Well, I think you have to reassure the Afghan people that there will be transparency, that justice will be done, that we're the opposite from al-Qaeda and the Taliban. They kill civilians deliberately; we protect civilians. And when a tragedy like this occurs, we have an absolute obligation to deal with it out in the open and to do so to ensure that justice is done and that they know how serious we are about protecting the innocent of every background and every nationality.

AMY GOODMAN: CBS's Bob Schieffer pointed out Gingrich took a different view when Obama apologized over the burning of the Korans. This is how Gingrich responded.

NEWT GINGRICH: Well, look, this is a totally different situation. With the burning of the Koran, they were killing young Americans. And no American president should apologize to people who are in the process of killing young Americans. This is a different situation. We obviously want to offer condolences to the families. I think we want to offer compensation. We want to recognize this is a terrible event. And as I said, we are in the business worldwide of protecting the innocent. Our enemies, the terrorists, are in the business worldwide of killing the innocent. And we need to make very clear that moral distinction, and then we have to live up to that distinction.

AMY GOODMAN: And Bob Schieffer also asked Gingrich if he thought it was time to leave Afghanistan now.

NEWT GINGRICH: I think it is. I think that we have to reassess the entire region. I think the revelations about Pakistan having hidden bin Laden for seven years in a military city near their National Defense University, and then hunting down not the people who were protecting bin Laden, but hunting down the people who were helping America, I think the Muslim

Brotherhood in Egypt—I mean, you look around the region, this is going to get much worse. That's why I've called for an American energy policy. We need to decide that we're going to produce our own oil, and we're going to, frankly, be capable of surviving without having to define or dominate the region, because I don't think we have the willpower or the capacity to do the things you have to do to fundamentally change the region.

AMY GOODMAN: That was Newt Gingrich on Sunday. Kathy Kelly, your response?

KATHY KELLY: Well, I think as long as the United States military and foreign policy elites can present the war in Afghanistan as basically a humanitarian war, what they get in return is vast indifference on the part of the United States public. I think that many people in the United States public are weary of the war, but they don't want to abandon people in Afghanistan, because they've been told again and again that we're protecting innocent civilians. It's not true. February 8th, helicopter gunships slaughtered eight shepherds on a mountainside as they were out grazing their flocks. Just three days ago in Kapisa, four civilians were killed, mistaken for insurgents. This goes on month after month after month. President Karzai has begged that the killing of civilians must stop. And there's always some sort of an apology given, and yet these killings continue.

And why is the United States in Afghanistan? I believe that the United States knows that it can't go after China or Russia, but they want to be able to continue a cold war and have a leg up on China by being able to control the pricing and the flow of resources that would course through Afghanistan. And for this reason, the United States wants to secure its bases, its forward operating bases, its prisons, and what will become an even larger embassy than the one that was built in Baghdad. And meanwhile, the United States public is poorly informed. The media very rarely gives adequate coverage to the effect of the warfare on the ordinary people in Afghanistan.

And what's more, the Strategic Partnership Agreement has never even been brought before the Afghan parliament. The United States wants to ram that agreement through before the NATO summit that is planned for Chicago. They want to be able to say it's a done deal, that they can keep their troops in Afghanistan until 2024 and beyond, and NATO troops, as well. And when would the ordinary people in Afghanistan ever get a chance to be involved in some kind of a referendum or some kind of representation in these kinds of decisions?

AMY GOODMAN: Kathy, you have returned home, where you had to go a week or two ago to Syracuse, New York, to stand trial for a drone protest you were involved with. Explain that protest and what happened.

KATHY KELLY: Well, in the Hancock Field in Syracuse, workers go in, and their job involves flying weaponized drones over Afghanistan. And if they're given the order to fire Hellfire missiles or drop a 500-pound bomb, then that's part of the daily work. And so, wanting to call attention to the increased reliance on drone warfare and a new kind of robotization of the United States military, which ought to be discussed here in the United States by the U.S. public and the Congress and the Senate, we staged a die-in. We laid down in front of the base. We didn't cause any obstruction to entrance to the base, because the police themselves had blocked off the roads.

Anyway, the judge in our case listened to 41 hours of testimony, including testimony from former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark. He nevertheless found all of the defendants guilty. He did not give credence to what we believe was our duty under international law to stand up to the United States government and call attention to these violations of international law that the drone warfare represent. The judge had imposed penalties, including jail time, on previous defendants, but most recently he didn't do that. He imposed financial penalties, fines. And we won't pay those fines. We don't believe that we were guilty of a crime. And, in fact, a good number of those who went before the judge told the judge, "We'll send that money to young people in Afghanistan working for peaceful causes."

AMY GOODMAN: You've just heard about the drone attacks in Yemen, as well as Afghanistan, Pakistan. Are you calling for the U.S. troops to leave Afghanistan now? And what do you think would happen if they were gone?

KATHY KELLY: Yes, I think that the United States should withdraw the troops from Afghanistan. But I believe the United States should pay reparations, along with other countries that have invaded and occupied and wrecked and created carnage in Afghanistan. And so I'm thinking of Russia, I'm thinking of Pakistan. All of these countries should be responsible to pay reparations for the suffering caused. And that money should be entrusted to people in Afghanistan who have had a track record of being able to sustain humanitarian work, and possibly to other NGOs, but not to the United States, not given the abysmal track record of the United States in the expenditures of billions and billions of dollars that have helped to fuel corruption. So, yes, I believe the United States troops should leave, and the United States

should try to understand security for Afghans, not only in terms of militarism, but food security, health security, availability of clean water, availability of electricity. I was just recently in Afghanistan. People, including ourselves, in the place where I stayed with the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, were melting snow in order to have access to water.

AMY GOODMAN: Kathy Kelly, I want to thank you very much for being with us, co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, a campaign to end U.S. military and economic warfare.