



**The Memory Box Initiative:
Seeking to Break the Cycle of Violence and
Tragedy in Afghanistan**



The devastating impact of war on all aspects of Afghan culture demanded a creative response: The Memory Box Initiative



Dedicated to the Afghan War Victims

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Seeking to Break the Cycle of Violence and Tragedy in Afghanistan
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Table of Contents

About AHRDO	i
Acknowledgement	ii
The AHRDO Memory Box initiative in Afghanistan	1
Tears Of Joy, Tears Of Pain	7
Happiness Lost	10
The Story Of Afghani	11
When Only Photographs Remain	13
The Story of Nik Bakht	14
The Well Of Death	16
The Story Of Pari Gul	18
One Fateful Day	19
The Story Of Pashtun	20
About Happiness	22
The Story Of Halima	23
A Story Of Never Ending Pain	26
The Story Of Nargis	27
A Mother's Vision Blurred By Death	30
The Story Of Farida	31
About The Futility Of Using Words To Describe War	33
The Story of Mah Jan	35
Questions About The Nature Of War	37
Rahima's Story	38
Victims Of Jihad	40
The Story of Ramazan Ali	42
A Survivor Of The Mazar-e- Sharif Genocide	43
Suhaila's Story	45
When Homes Turn Into Graveyards	46
The Story of Shirin Gul	47
The Girl Who Took On The Role Of Her Father	49
The Story Of Alia	52
A Wedding Ceremony That Never Took Place	53
The Story Of Sarwar's Mother	54
The Tearful Eyes Of A Young Woman	55
The Story Of Karima	57
About Crime And Punishment	58
The Story Of Mah Parwar	60
Hope Betrayed	61
The Story Of Mahnaz	62
The Trauma Of Rebuilding A Shattered Existence	64
The Story Of Negar	66
There Is Nothing Holy About War	67
The Story of Safura	68

About AHRDO

The Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization (AHRDO) is an independent, non-governmental and not-for-profit organization established in early 2009 by a number of Afghan Human Rights and Civil Society activists with a strong commitment to work with the most marginalized sectors of society.

AHRDO is committed to the promotion of participatory democracy, a culture of non-violence and the respect for human rights in Afghanistan and the region, principally through employing a variety of arts and theatre-based programs that create spaces for dialogue, peace-building, social justice, public participation and consequently societal transformation from the grassroots up.

Besides, AHRDO aims to complement the ongoing external democratizing efforts with activities that are rooted and informed by local cultural traditions and values, exploring unique ways that support the people of Afghanistan to create their own visions of the future and provide opportunities for them to transform fear into friendship, disappointment into hope, knowledge into understanding, hesitation into action and individual strivings into collective efforts for the purpose of building a peaceful, just and democratic society.

Since its inception, AHRDO has undertaken a large number of innovative initiatives including Afghanistan's first Legislative Theatre project focusing on Women's Rights, the establishment of a Network of Afghan Young Women Leaders, a number of Shura Councils for Widows as well as the promotion of a human rights culture through encouraging Afghan writers to produce literary works with human rights-related content. In addition, working with Members of Parliament and other high-level authorities, AHRDO has been involved in the promotion of national and international policy via the writing of in-depth policy reports on Women's Rights and Transitional Justice in Afghanistan.

Acknowledgement

This booklet would not have been possible without the generosity of the family members of those who lost their lives during the last few decades of violent conflict in Afghanistan. It is them who provided the stories and remaining objects of their deceased loved ones. It is them who are the protagonists of the pages that follow.

In terms of the creation of the booklet, Mohammad Aslam Jawadi articulated, structured and analyzed the victims' stories. Hadi Marifat translated the book from Dari into English, and Hjalmar Joffre-Eichhorn took on the challenging task of editing the book. Salim Rajabi, Dr. Sharif and Zaman Khoshnam contributed to the identification of the victims and the implementation of the Memory Box workshops. Zahara Yagana conducted the individual interviews and collected most of the victims' objects and personal belongings for the Memory Boxes. Finally, the AHRDO regional office in Mazar-e- Sharif and the AHRDO administrative staff in Kabul played a crucial role in providing logistical and other support.

AHRDO would like to thank the aforementioned individuals for their efforts under a very stressful timeframe and a very challenging security environment. Needless to say, the publication of this book would not have been possible without the altruism and self-sacrifice that each and every member of the AHRDO family demonstrated over the course of creating this booklet.

AHRDO would also like to express its deep appreciation to Afghan civil society, human rights and youth organizations, the Ministry of Information and Culture, Kabul Public Library and the Kabul Municipality for their valuable assistance.

Finally, the senior leadership of the Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization would like to thank the Embassy of Canada in Afghanistan for its generous financial aid throughout this initiative.

Khodadad Bisharat
Executive Director

Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization (AHRDO)
March 2013



The AHRDO Memory Box initiative in Afghanistan-A Creative Journey into the Past in the Quest for a better Future

Background

The AHRDO Memory Box initiative arose out of the need to provide a space for the victims of Afghanistan to finally tell their stories of loss and resilience in the face of the country's violent history of mass murder, genocide, palace revolutions and unrelenting political upheaval. It is an attempt to actively propel these victims from their current position on the margins of society into the centre of the ongoing peace and reconciliation process, with the final aim of making important, grassroots contributions to breaking the seemingly endless cycle of violence and tragedy.

Thus far, a culture of impunity incessantly perpetuated by those too powerful to have their might threatened by a group of illiterate men and women living amongst the rubbles of war, has prevented any attempt to officially and systematically recognize the suffering of millions of ordinary Afghan citizens. No judicial persecution of any of the readily identifiable perpetrators of mass atrocities has ever taken place. No reparations have been paid to those who have endured decades of misery and deprivation. Only a few memorials remembering the innocent dead have been built, most of them by virtue of individual initiatives and in fact, against the will of those with blood on their hands.

To add insult to injury, those courageous activists who have dared to work towards some form of justice in the country have largely met with condescending silence, hollow excuses and, on various occasions, violence, including torture and murder. As a result, and in spite of more than 11 years of internationally-backed human rights activities in the country, the notion of addressing the past

in order to create a more peaceful, just and prosperous future for all seems ever more distant for the victims of Afghanistan.

At the same time, after more than four years of close, generally arts-based collaborations between AHRDO and various victims' and widows' associations in different parts of the country, it is as clear as crystal that those who have lost their beloved will not desist from standing their ground until their demands for recognition, truth-telling and justice have been met. Hence the AHRDO Memory Box initiative with war widows constitutes another novel and innovative effort to promote the voices of those who must not be forgotten when it comes to peace and justice in Afghanistan.

The History of Memory Boxes in Afghanistan

In early 2011, after several years of applying various participatory theatre techniques such as Theatre of the Oppressed and Playback Theatre to work with Afghanistan's victims of war, the AHRDO team decided to search for additional, people's-led ways of using the arts to promote an engagement with the country's violent past and present. One well-known method that had not yet been explored was the so-called Aesthetics of the Oppressed. According to its founder Augusto Boal, the method seeks to develop in those that practice it a capacity for perceiving the world by means of all the arts, centering around three human faculties: the Word, the Sound and the Image. In doing that, an important distinction is drawn between the aesthetic process and the aesthetic product, with the former being indispensable for the latter to exist. At the same time, the process itself may be inconclusive without necessarily losing any of its validity with regards to empowering people to rediscover and exercise their inherently present but socially denied capacity to create. Hence, engaging with the Aesthetics of the Oppressed, participants are invited to create their own words, make their own sounds and produce their own images in the form of poems, declarations of identity, photos, drawings, songs, etc.

Determined to use this method, but still unsure about the concrete outcomes of the aesthetic process itself, the AHRDO team searched for further means and eventually came across "Making Memories Matter", a unique initiative conducted in Europe in 2005. To mark the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, the European Reminiscence Network led by Pam Schweitzer created



a new cultural heritage project involving survivors from different countries involved in the war. The idea was to work with wooden boxes originally used as ammunition containers by the armed forces of these countries and recycle them as Memory Boxes, or miniature display cases for life portraits of older people from the partner countries. Concretely, artists trained in reminiscence work invited individual elders to reflect upon their past lives and to explore ways of expressing their memories and feelings in a powerful visual form. The ultimate outcome was a mobile exhibition across the participating countries, in which a total of seventy boxes were put on display, with the final aim of contributing to deeper and better European understanding.

Upon collective reflection, the AHRDO team saw the inherent link between these two methodologies and decided to combine them in what became Afghanistan's first fully victims'-led Memory Box initiative. Adapting both methods to the local realities of more than three decades of war, high illiteracy rates (especially among women) and a culture of female social invisibility, while using the organization's unique experience of working with grassroots participatory theatre, including countless confidence- and skill-building games and exercises, the AHRDO team began to work with different widow's associations in Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif. The results were highly encouraging, with dozens of powerful Memory Boxes full of personal objects and artistic artifacts created entirely by the women themselves.

The process of creating the boxes was both painful as well as emotionally and physically challenging for everyone involved. Nevertheless, the participating widows expressed a great deal of satisfaction and pride about what they had achieved, especially once their boxes were put on display for hundreds of people to witness during the multiple exhibitions organized by AHRDO in 2011 and 2012. Perhaps more importantly, many of the participants acknowledged a certain amount of healing after finally having had their stories recognized. Besides, the great deal of media coverage and public attention made an important, bottom-up contribution to addressing Afghanistan's war legacy.

Why Memory Boxes in Afghanistan?

Reminiscence is the act of recalling and sharing one's memories, and is an essential part of everyday life. Unfortunately, more than 30 years of impunity in

Afghanistan have generally prevented those at the receiving end of violence from engaging in such acts of sharing, consequently causing them further distress and an often described sense of abandonment and isolation. On the few occasions when attempts were made to look into the country's painful truth of the past, these resulted in elite-led, top-down endeavors with grandiose rhetoric and no concrete outcomes, let alone any form of redress for the millions of ordinary victims of war.

Hence, the Memory Box initiative aspires to make the victims of Afghanistan the main protagonists in the creation of public memory about the country's long history of violence and human rights abuses. It is an invitation to reflect upon one's past life and express one's feelings and memories in a powerful visual form. Memory Boxes offer a window into the lives of victims, exploring personal histories through a reflective creative process that results in the appearance of physical spaces of remembrance entirely produced by the victims themselves. In addition, the Memory Boxes promote the notion of peace as a basic human right, the institutionalization of the victims memories as a key element of any peace building process and the request not to forget the past in order to prevent further bloodshed in the future.

While each box makes a powerful individual statement, they simultaneously contribute to a more collective truth-telling endeavor the moment several memory boxes are brought together in the same space. In short, the Memory Box initiative is a tribute to the ordinary people of Afghanistan who seek to reclaim themselves as subjects of their own life narratives and thereby make a contribution to peace, justice and democracy in their country.

How are the Memory Boxes produced?

The Memory Boxes are produced as a result of an aesthetic process conducted by a facilitator leading the workshop participants through a variety of artistic games and exercises. Each participant can choose which moments of their lives they would like to focus on and how to represent these moments in their personal boxes using specific images or objects. The process usually takes 3-5 days and includes a full day of trust- and group-building exercises as well as activities that foster the participants' gradual discovery of their long-forgotten creative capacities. In addition, all exercises are used to promote discussion



about war and peace in Afghanistan while opportunities are provided for those willing to tell their personal stories. Eventually, the focus shifts to making the individual memory boxes. Under the guidance of the facilitator but with full autonomy, decision-making capacity and ownership the participants create their own boxes consisting primarily of personal objects which often belong to their deceased family member(s), such as copies of the Quran, wedding certificates, jewelry given by the late husband, photos of martyred children or Burkhas formerly worn by their murdered sisters.

In addition, during the creative process participants produce further artistic artifacts related to their life stories. Often these include self-written poems, declarations of identity, pictures taken of their current life situations, various paintings, drawings and, frequently at the end of the process just before the creation of the Memory Box, their entire life journeys sketched on paper with colored pens, crayons and watercolors. Besides, the participants often engage in a reflective process on the national flags of Afghanistan. This aspect is of particular significance as the country has had more changes of its national flag during the 20th century than any other country in the world, twenty in total. More importantly, the constant change of flags during the past three decades of conflict is often attached to very painful personal loss. Consequently, the participants are asked to paint the flag which is most significant to their own life stories, only to then proceed and draw a second, new flag that depicts the Afghanistan as each individual participant would like to see it.

Finally, once all the personal objects and artistic artifacts have been created and gathered, usually more than 10-15 per person, participants are invited to set up their own, personal museum, i.e. they assemble their Memory Boxes in the most aesthetic and artistic manner and make them presentable for display. The artists are also asked to prepare a brief verbal presentation they will use to explain the content of their box to those interested in knowing more. The aesthetic process concludes with a final walk through the Museum of Memory Boxes followed by a closing circle in which the participants share their last thoughts and feelings about their experiences during the workshop.

Achievements up to the present

Since the summer of 2011, AHRDO has conducted eight Memory Box work-

shops in Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif resulting in more than one hundred individual boxes created and designed by victims of war from at least five provinces of Afghanistan. Many of these boxes were publicly displayed during three exhibitions in Kabul that were visited by more than one thousand five hundred people. In addition, AHRDO published a newsletter in English summarizing the most important achievements of the Memory Boxes initiative. This newsletter was shared with people from different parts of the world and produced a great deal of interest in transferring the Memory Box experience to other countries in need of an authentic grassroots approach to mobilize victims of human rights abuses.

A look into the future

Given the considerable success of the Memory Box initiative so far, the Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization aims to further develop the methodology by

- Expanding the Memory Box initiative to other provinces across Afghanistan, thereby allowing for more people to share their stories and make a contribution to peace and justice
- Producing and publishing a policy paper on how the Memory Boxes can be included as part of ongoing memorialization efforts in the country
- Making the Memory Boxes a key component for the establishment of Afghanistan's first museum dedicated to the victims of Afghanistan
- Taking the Memory Box exhibition on an international tour for further advocacy work in support and protection of the victims of Afghanistan as well as to reach the Afghan diaspora around the world.





Tears Of Joy, Tears Of Pain

For Basira, her life began to unravel on one bloody afternoon. The cold February weather brought everyone to the yard of the house. A clear sky and plenty of sunlight provided an opportunity for the children to play. Zakia, 6 years old, brought her little brother Matiuallah to the yard to enjoy the sun. Everyone was ready for a beautiful day. The joy and happiness was evident on the faces of all, especially on Zakia's face. She was speaking to her little brother as if she were an adult. In her sweet and innocent accent, she told her brother about the light of the sun, the hardships of winter and the good future that lay ahead of them. She showed her toys to her brother and promised him to buy a good toy for him, too.

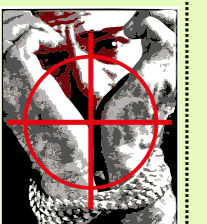
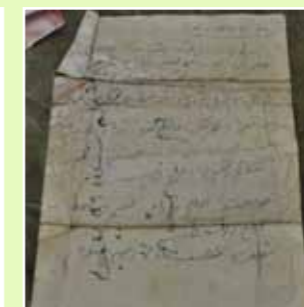
She took Matiuallah's hands, rubbed them together, sang a song and then kissed her little brother. Zakia was wearing a red coat. With the reflection of the sunlight and the snowy background, she looked almost purple. Her brownish hair was dancing on her red coat as she was jumping up and down. Her face was shining and her eyes were hidden under the thickness of her black eyelashes.

The big world outside was also very exciting for Matiuallah. He loved laughing, playing and sometimes shouting at his older sister Zakia. Matiuallah had fleshy white skin, thick hair and blue eyes. When he smiled, everyone was enchanted.

Watching such a memorable scene in a city where nothing except the sound of guns, rockets and bullets could be heard, made Basira very happy. While watching her children play, she prayed to God to protect them in these difficult times. What she did not realize is that happiness in times of violence is not sustainable and that even a mother's prayer cannot halt the brutal power of war. That day, a reception was prepared and they were invited to a feast in their beautiful yard. Everything was ready for Basira and her children to forget the horrors of war for a brief moment. Yet, this moment quickly transformed into unspeakable tragedy.



No one understood what was happening. A thunderous sound followed by a huge explosion blurred the atmosphere. The blue sky and clear sunshine were suddenly gone. Basira can perfectly recall the tragic event but she cannot precisely explain what happened that day. After the explosion, Basira says, "I got up and saw that all my family members were lying on the ground. I was confused, wandering around not knowing what to do. I heard Zakia screaming and calling for me. She asked for water. When I returned with the water Zakia was no longer speaking. I touched her body but it





was already cold. Her eyes were open, staring at me. I put her down and ran towards Matiuallah. I was so happy when I realized he was still alive. I hugged him. Suddenly, he stopped crying and I felt something cold and wet in my hand. I saw his belly ripped open and all his intestines coming out. I understood that he was dead just like Zakia. I cried and cried and cried! I was screaming and running around. After that, I cannot remember what happened.”

Until today, Basira cannot talk much about that tragic moment. When she speaks about Zakia and Matiuallah, the color of her face changes. Tears flow uncontrollably from her eyes. Sometimes, she cries so much that her headscarf is soaking wet. She says, “I feel that I have a deep wound in my chest. A wound that continuously spits out blood. I’m sure one day I will drown in my own blood.”



Happiness Lost

The violence in the aftermath of the 1978 Saur revolution has forever destroyed Afghani’s happiness. Before the coup she lived a joyful life with her husband Allah Dad. Everything was going well. The result of their happy marriage were two healthy children, a boy and a girl. Afghani was proud of her husband, who was known to be well educated and intellectual. They lived in comfortable economic conditions. They were pleased with their lives and did not feel that anyone could ever take away their satisfaction and happiness. But suddenly everything changed. Allah Dad was arrested by the government and taken to Puli Charkhi prison. He was never convicted of any crime and until today no one knows what happened to him.

The disappearance of Allah Dad radically altered the life of Afghani. Soon after, an endless cycle of trouble and suffering began. Looking everywhere for her husband, she did not manage to find him. Later, she lost her father, a brother and her father-in-law. As she became increasingly helpless and with rising violence in Kabul, she eventually migrated to Peshawar. Along with her brother and two young children, she walked all the way to Jaji and Parachinar and finally reached Peshawar. However, in Peshawar she could not afford the cost of living and shortly after took her children and returned to Afghanistan, where she eventually settled in Shamali, north of the capital Kabul.

In Shamali, she worked as vintager. Knowing that she was a widow, all the men stared at her in inappropriate ways. But Afghani was strong enough to resist the patriarchal structure of society and despite the mounting challenges, raised her two children on her own. Finally, one of the commanders in the area forced her to marry him. After two years of marriage, the commander was killed and she remained alone with what by then had become three children. Since then Afghani has done everything in her power to raise her children. She is now approximately fifty-five years old and has lost the strength to continue struggling for a better life. More than thirty years after the death of Allah Dad, no sign of joy and happiness is visible in her tenacious face. A world of untold stories are archived in her decrepit body.





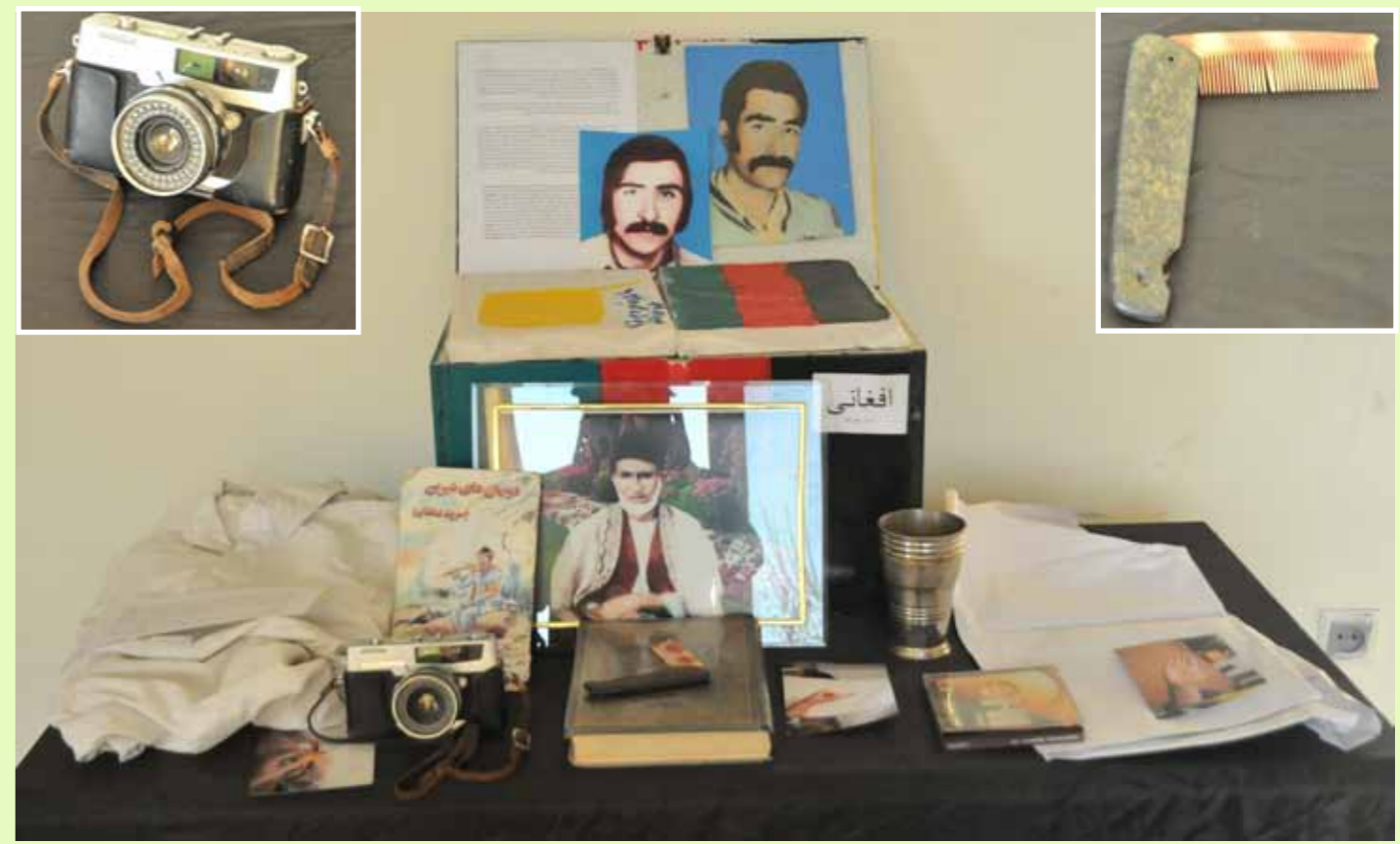
The Story Of Afghani

My husband Allah Dad had just finished high school when we moved from Shamali to Kabul city. One day, he went out and said that he was going to the university to take an exam. He was arrested along with another person who was fighting against the Soviet army close to Block Twelve of the Old Macroyan. I was just over 20 years old when Allah Dad disappeared. At that time we were living in Qala-e-Wahid, near Kote- Sangi. Our living conditions were good. We had a house and property. But after the death of my husband, our lives were ruined. I migrated to Pakistan with my two small children. When I realized that I could not afford living in Pakistan, we went back to Afghanistan.

My husband was arrested during the time of the Khalq and Parcham regime.

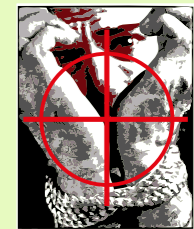
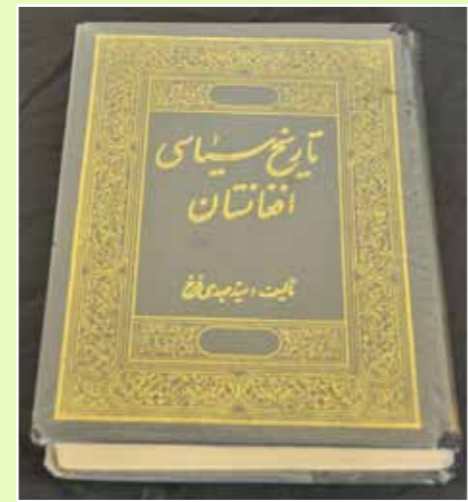
I personally could not follow his case but my mother-in-law made several inquires about his whereabouts without any results. Then, my mother-in-law went to Sadarat where she was informed that her son was imprisoned in Puli Charkhi. In Puli Charkhi she was told that her son was no longer detained there and that she should pray for his soul. My mother-in-law returned back home in tears.

Later on when some political prisoners were released, he was not among them, which is when we were finally convinced that he was no longer alive. As the regime was looking after me too, I walked twelve days and nights all the way through the Safi Mountain to Jaji and Parachinar to get to Peshawar. One of my brothers accompanied me in this long and risky journey. When we finally got to Peshawar, my brother began to work in a shop. However, as it was very difficult to live there, I soon came back to Afghanistan while my brother went to Iran.



In Afghanistan, I moved to Shamali and began working in a grape field to feed my children. Twelve years later a commander forced me to marry him. I now have a 19 year-old boy from him. Two years after our marriage, my second husband was killed.

Among the things left from my first husband is his picture and a book. His photo and book are very special to me because they remind me of our beautiful times together. I am including these two important objects in my Memory Box so that my husband's memory remains alive. I hope that these objects will help others to distinguish between those who are open-minded and progressive and those who kill other human beings.





When Only Photographs Remain

Nik Bakht is the symbol of a victimized generation struggling to deal with the trauma of never ending war. The dragons of war devoured her two sons within a short period of time and by now it hardly matters who was responsible for their murders. What is important is the infinite injury inflicted upon her heart. Years after her sons' departure, she and her aging husband are living an existence between life and death, their lives, in the aftermath of their sons' murder, restricted only to the "sphere of pain". This couple spent most of their years grieving their lost sons. Now they are old and the chains of poverty and helplessness have invaded them once and for all. There is no more energy left in her husband's body to work as a porter to make ends meet. The "storm of poverty" has destroyed their lives. They can do nothing except to watch other people's happiness with broken hearts and sad eyes. Every time they look into the face of a young man, they remember their own young sons at the time of their early death: Ramazan was 21 years old and Abdul Hamid 19 when they were killed.

If the war did not take the lives of Ramazan and Abdul Hamid, perhaps today everything would be different. They might even be feeling the prosperity, joy and happiness of being grandparents. Unfortunately, for Nik Bakht and her husband to smile has become a meaningless act as they are constantly disturbed by the tragic deaths of Ramazan and Abdul Hamid. For them, every moment of their lives has turned into a terrible nightmare and their only solace are the photographs of Ramazan and Abdul Hamid, who continue to live in their memories until the day their souls will go to rest.

A journey into the painful life of Nik Bakht can open our eyes to the hidden realities of war. War is not just a passing episode in the history of a country. When it occurs, it takes away the peace and wellbeing of the people forever.

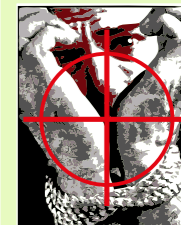
The Story of Nik Bakht



My name is Nik Bakht and I am almost 60 years old. I am originally from Bamiyan but have been living in Kabul for a long time. Our life was good before the war but then I lost two of my sons. One of them was killed in Deh Mazang and the other one in Kote- Sangi. Ramazan was killed in Kote- Sangi though I do not exactly know how it happened... a bullet was stuck in his head and his eyes bulged.

My second son was called Abdul Hamid. He was two years younger than Ramazan. He died only a month after Ramazan's murder. It happened during the holy month of Ramadan and Abdul Hamid had gone to the bakery to buy bread. We did not know that he had been shot. Later we learned that after he was shot, he was taken to the hospital and that he was still alive when they took him. When he finally died, his body was brought to the local mosque, which is where we were informed about his death.

During the war everyone we knew left and fled the city and we were asked to take care of people's homes. However, the bullets were coming from all sides and we were unable to go anywhere. In those days, my husband worked as a porter and it was very hard for us to make ends





meet. Today, it is even more challenging as my husband can no longer work. He suffers from psychological problems and keeps talking to himself. Of course, I am not very stable either. On the contrary, I feel completely shattered and abandoned.

There are only very few things left from my sons. These objects are very dear to me as they remind me of them. I am including them in the Memory Box to make my sons' memories last. I want to keep them until the day I can finally ask the perpetrators for what reason they killed my innocent sons.

I suffer a great deal because of their deaths. If they were alive today, I would certainly have many grandchildren. In fact, shortly before his death my elder son had just got engaged and we were preparing everything for their marriage. The wedding never happened.



The Well Of Death

War is the most egotistical and brutal manifestation of humankind. It does not produce anything except horror and destruction. It does not distinguish between old or young, men, women or children. The

lashes of war hurt everyone's body. At the same time, not everyone suffers equally from war. Some suffer more, some less. But it is those who did not actively partake in the creation of war that usually bear the brunt of all the suffering. It is them who are victimized by a fate designed by others.

The story of Sayed Ibrahim Shah's murder uncovers one such catastrophic consequences of war. He was an ordinary citizen with no links to the world of politics. His only crime was that he lived in Dasht-e- Barchi, a neighborhood of Kabul that had become synonymous with suffering. Here, every day there existed a strong likelihood that a rocket or stray bullet could kill someone. It seems that the lives of its population were not regarded as worthy of living. It appears that those who unleashed the violence were doing it for the pleasure of seeing the people of Dasht-e- Barchi suffer. Yet, Sayed Ibrahim Shah had no other place to live. Dasht-e- Barchi was his only and final refuge.

Living in an environment of constant terror, Sayed Ibrahim Shah was well aware that he had the responsibility to protect his family. He therefore sent them to far-away Behsud district while he and one of his sons remained to look after his home and belongings. It was the last time his family members would ever see him.

One day he was walking the streets when he was apprehended by his own countrymen and taken to the Company area of Kabul. First, his family did not know about his whereabouts but later they found out that he had been arrested by a local commander, detaining him in his own private jail. Sayed Ibrahim Shah's family paid a number of bribes to secure his release but all they received in return were a turban, a hat as well as a toothbrush and toothpaste. There are different stories about how he was killed. According to one





of them, the militias threw him down a well which is where local residents later found him.

Pari Gul is one of his family members. She tells the story of Sayed Ibrahim Shah as follows:



The Story Of Pari Gul

Sayed Ibrahim Shah was both my uncle and father-in-law. He was killed during the civil war in Kabul, during which he and my husband remained in the city while the rest of the family was sent to Behsud. One day, he had just left his home when one of the warring factions arrested him and then took him to Company area, where he was locked up in a private jail. He was detained together with his friend and spent three months there. He was then murdered and buried. We never saw his dead body.

In fact, we only came to know about his murder after we received his turban, hat and toothbrush. The man who brought his possessions told us how the militias had tortured him. With his feet in chains, he supplied water to the militia base every day. Eventually his dead body was found in a well. Later on, the people from the area took him out of the well and gave him a proper burial. All what is left from him are his turban, hat and toothbrush. I now want to show these objects to other people so they understand that the militias killed a 70 years old man!





One Fateful Day

The story of Aziz Gul's death is neither unique nor exclusive. Totally unexpected deaths like his have ruined the lives of countless families in Afghanistan.

Stories like his have been told in each corner of the country, though the sad truth is that people like Aziz Gul are never remembered by those who benefit from the existence of war. It is them who do not care about the suffering that war inflicts on its victims. These men enjoy igniting the fire of war and playing with it. They have chosen war as their way of life.

The death of Aziz Gul was an absolute tragedy. For his family whose wishes and hopes for the future were inseparably linked with the fate of Aziz Gul, his sudden death meant the end of the world for them. When Aziz Gul died, all their dreams melted and the hell of misery and desolation opened its mouth to devour them.

Aziz Gul was 15 years-old and already helped his aging father in his work. His father was happy that he would eventually become the main breadwinner in the family. One day, Aziz was watering his father's field in Shamali, North of Kabul when a rocket struck and killed him. His father never came to terms with the death of his son and after years of struggling with the tragedy and its repercussions, finally died too.

This in turn marked the beginning of the end for his mother, Pashtun, who was left behind with three children. In order to provide for them, she cleaned and washed other people's clothes. Sometimes, in order to put food on the table she collected leftovers from wastebaskets. Other times, she and her children spent their days without eating at all. Until today, Pashtun cannot find words to describe her miserable fate.

The Story Of Pashtun

Our life was relatively good when Aziz Gul was still alive. It was during the time of the Soviet invasion that my son was killed. We were at home when our neighbor informed us about his murder. He had gone outside to water the field when a rocket struck. His father, brother and sisters started to cry immediately as we went to see his dead body lying on a wheelbarrow.

Later on, my husband could not cope with his son's death and eventually stopped working. He died five years later. After his death our lives got even worse. We lived in an abandoned house. At times, we even ate left-

overs from the wastebaskets of others. I worked as a cleaner. Later on, my younger son started to work in the streets. Our survival was dependent on his income.

When the Taliban burned my house in Shamali we moved to Kabul. I still work as cleaner today. My life is as bad as it was before. Consequently, I have psychological problems.





I'll never forget those days of being abandoned by everyone and left without food. Whenever food rations were distributed, I went and took them home. Those were the only times we could eat properly. Today, I am very sick, but cannot afford to go and see a doctor. My son is twenty years old, but thin and weak. We now live in a rental house. I will never forget Aziz Gul. It is very strange because he was my stepson. His mother had left him. Aziz Gul suffered a lot and finally died at a young age.



About Happiness

Halima's list of dreams is neither very long nor very ambitious. Her dream is to be happy. Certainly many people in war-torn societies like Afghanistan have similar dreams of happiness. For them, happiness is not about prosperity, wealth and power. Neither is it about having stylish and luxurious mansions, or expensive cars. In short, they do not have as sophisticated an understanding of happiness as ordinary people in other countries have.

On the contrary, their world is extremely small and their expectations are very modest. For Halima and people like her, happiness means bread. It means being able to provide a piece of bread for their children to sleep at night with their bellies full so that they can dream of other things than something to eat. At best, happiness means having a home and that one's children sleep under a roof, in which they can grow up in peace. In addition, for people like Halima happiness means being looked upon as a normal member of society. As long as the community does not humiliate her and her sons and they can live without fear and intimidation, she is content. Halima does not desire much more than these simple things.

Unfortunately, war has denied her even the simplest of dreams. Six years after getting married, she lost her husband and was left alone with four children, with the fourth one being born six months after the death of Ghulam Hazarat. For three years they survived thanks to the assistance of the Najibullah government. However, after the Mujahidin took power in Kabul, the situation changed and government funding was no longer available for them. As a result, Halima had to sell her home utensils one after another in order to feed her children. When there was nothing left to sell, she had no option but to wash and clean people's clothes and homes. Other times, she worked as a sewer. She remembers many days when she could only provide dry bread for her children. Today she is 45 years old, has a heart disease and can no longer operate the sewing machine. The nightmare of poverty has returned. She does not know whether a day will come when she can finally feed her children properly. If such a day were to arrive, she would finally consider herself happy. Such is Halima's modest understanding of happiness.





The Story Of Halima

When I first got married, it was my father-in-law who was the main breadwinner for our family. He was a carpenter. Later on, my father-in-law stopped working due to old age. Therefore, my husband joined the army as an ordinary soldier. My husband did not have a good salary. Since he was deployed in another province,

it was difficult to send money home. In those days, together with my sister-in-law, we were doing embroidery work at home and then sold it at the local market. Eight months later, my husband returned on home leave and with the small salary he brought, we bought flour and oil. He stayed with us for a few days and then went back to the barracks. After eight months, he once again sent money to us through one of our relatives. Then, after two years my husband finally came back and we had two more children. He began working at a bakery. In those days, our living conditions were relatively good.



After a while, he was recalled by the army. Eighteen months later he was killed, just a few days before his home leave. We waited for him to come home but he did not come. On the 18th day, I woke up and told his mother that I was going to prepare bulani for her son today. I prepared everything and then fell asleep. My mother-in-law came and woke me up and I returned to my preparations. I had prepared only three bulani when I heard someone crying outside the house. I went out and saw two soldiers standing at the main door. They inquired if this house belonged to Hazarat Khan and when my father-in-law affirmed, the soldiers told him that Hazarat Khan had been injured and hospitalized. Together they went to the hospital where they discovered that Hazarat Khan had died.

They came back home around 4pm. I was calling my father-in-law Baba, so I asked Baba how Hazarat Khan was. He answered that he was slightly injured and that he would bring him home the day after. My younger son did not sleep the whole night and asked to go and see his father. That night a lot of people came to our home. They brought big dishes. I heard my uncle asking for the Quran. I told my father-in-law that he was trying to hide something from me and that perhaps Hazarat Khan had died. I began to cry. My mother-in-law tried to make me understand that they needed the Quran for a different purpose.

The next morning, my father-in-law asked me to clean my room saying that he and his friends would like to sit there. I went and cleaned the room. Later on, my sister-in-laws came in. They hugged me and said that Hazarat Khan had passed away. I was six months pregnant. After the news, I fainted and remained unconscious for a long time. Later, when I regained consciousness, I saw a coffin covered with red cloth. My six-year old daughter came and asked me who she should call father from now on. She hid under the bed and began to cry.



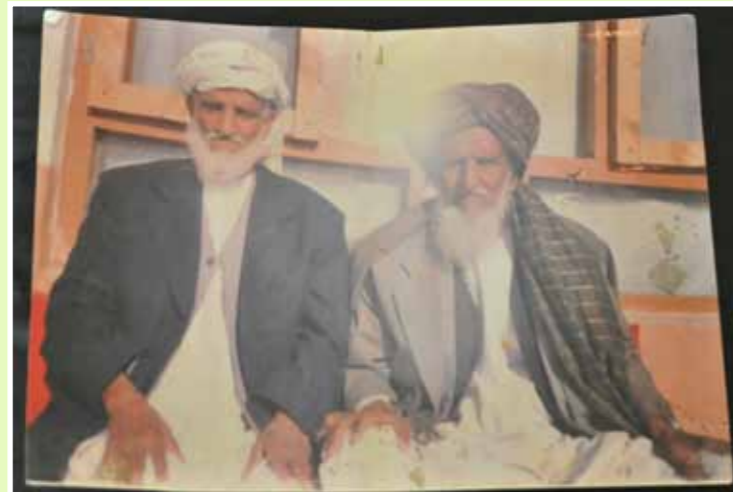
Over the next few weeks, the fire of war spread everywhere including Chihil Sotun where we resided. Everyone was forced to leave their homes and we moved to Shur Bazaar. There, my mother-in-law died. Then, I went to live in my father's home in Jade- Asmayi where we had nothing to eat. Next, I stayed with my sister-in-law for three months before we finally found a place to stay, though we did not even have a carpet to sit on. Later, someone donated military blankets and a bag of flour but I had no utensils to make bread for my children and I was forced to borrow a small cooking pan from my neighbor. My children slept most of the time, as there was nothing for them to eat. In the evenings, we had nothing to light and





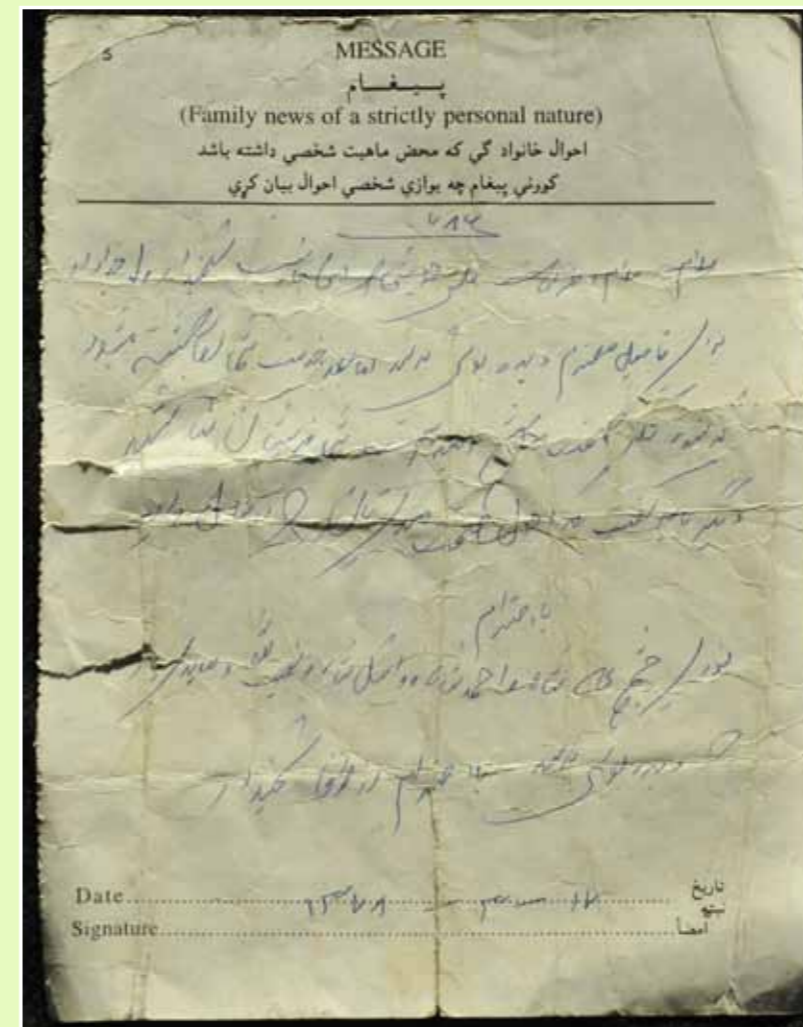
heat our home with. We spent three months like this. When the fighting finally came to a halt I borrowed a sewing machine from my father and began sewing for others in order to feed my children. Gradually, I managed to buy little things for home including three cups, spoons and a plastic blanket.

The worst moments were those days that I had no food to give to my children except a piece of bread. Nowadays, I wash clothes and tailor. Although this is increasingly difficult to do as I have a heart problem.



A Story Of Never Ending Pain

If there had been no war, Nargis could have been one of the happiest women on earth. She is a strong and good woman full of courage and determination who, in spite of all the difficulties that she has faced, always has a smile on her lips. At the same time, she is dejected and disillusioned by all the things that happened to her over the years: Successive displacements, homelessness and, most of all, the death of her husband, Sakhidad. When the Taliban arrested him, she was forced to sell her house in order to bribe the Taliban to release Sakhidad, but all she received in return was his dead body. She alone had to transport the corpse all the way from the eastern part of Kabul to Dasht-e- Barchi. Since then, her life seems like a never ending journey of suffering, in which Nargis plays the role of both father and mother for her five children for whom she hopes that a better tomorrow will eventually arrive.



The Story Of Nargis

My name is Nargis and I am 40 years old. I live in Dasht-e Barchi. I am originally from Bamyán province. When we lived in Bamyán, we had a decent life as my father-in-law had a great deal of land. My husband Sakhidad known as Hedayat was the only son of his family. When the Taliban attacked Bamyán, they looted our properties and we were displaced to Kabul. We had to walk all the way and my youngest child was only 40 days old.

Once in Kabul, my husband opened a shop in Sar-e Kariz. However, some people did not like my husband and reported to the Taliban that he was a member of the opposition. The Taliban came and arrested him in May 2000. When we learned that he had been arrested, my cousin searched everywhere but could not find him. After four days, we came to know that he had been detained in Department No. 11 but that no one was allowed to meet him. He was first taken to the Intelligence Department and then to Department No.6 where he was detained for six months. We know that the Taliban tortured him daily without giving him any food. When my cousin tried to deliver food for him he was not allowed to meet my husband.



One day I was sitting at home when my cousin came. It was early morning and I was very worried that something might have happened to Hedayat. When I saw him, I was full of fear because he usually did not visit us in the morning. He held a letter in his hand and told me not to worry. He said that Hedayat had sent a letter through the ICRC and that we were now ensured that he was alive and where he was held captive.

After a great deal of effort, I found out that Mawlawi Abdul Haq was the director of Department No. 3. I asked him to give me permission to visit Hedayat in prison and after paying him a huge amount of money, he allowed me to meet my husband. From then on, every two weeks my youngest son and I visited him in prison, even though sometimes the Taliban were making excuses and denied us entry. Every time on the way to the prison, I prayed to be granted permission to see my husband. Every time I went to see him, I had to walk all the way from Cinema Pamir to Department No. 3 with my child on my arms and food and clothes in my hand hoping to meet my husband. Every time I saw him, he gave me little gifts for the children in return.

Hedayat was imprisoned there for six months. Then we were told that they would release him in exchange for 350,000 Afghani. I did my best to find the money. I sold our house. I borrowed money from my brother and took money from people promising them to pay the money back with interest. I finally gathered the money and paid the authorities. They promised to release him the following Sunday but several Sundays passed without his release. After forty days I went there again and asked two guards, Shah Wali and Mudir Abdurrahman, whether Hedayat would be released today. They said that they did know now and asked me to wait. Shortly after, the gate was opened and a body was brought out on a footstool. I thought that



someone had fainted but it was Hedayat's body. I began to scream and curse at everyone and threw away my chadari. I was totally out of my mind.

I was running around like mad until I found a taxi. I told the taxi driver to take us home. He accepted and put my husband's body inside the car. When my brothers saw me in the car, they thought that Hedayat had been released. They all came to my home. I told them that the Taliban had informed me that Hedayat was dead but I still thought that he might be unconscious. I asked my brothers to fetch a doctor. He eventually came and said that Hedayat had passed away a long time ago. We then buried him in Tap-e Shuhada.

When my husband died, he was 33 years old and I was 28. We had nothing left at home as I had sold everything to pay for the release of Hedayat. We had five children and my oldest son was only 10 years old, with the youngest no older than 8 months. After my husband's death we had a very hard life. No one helped us. We lived in a tent as no one was willing to rent out his home to a widowed woman. I was indebted and the government did nothing to address my suffering.

Today, no one listens to our stories of sadness. I voted for Karzai to help the victims' families but he has done nothing so far. I also voted during the parliamentary elections, hoping that the members of the parliament would do something for us but they have not done anything either. As soon as they reach a position of power, they forget us. They just make vague promises and then do nothing. No official has ever asked us about our problems or listened to us. Earlier, I used to receive 300 Afghani but this year they have removed the names of my sons from the list of beneficiaries.

My husband's most valuable souvenirs are his five children. The most important object that he left for us is his blanket. It is the same blanket with which we covered his coffin. Another object is the letter that he sent us from prison as well as some gifts that he had given us. Most importantly, I have kept the veil that he gave me for our wedding ceremony. Finally, there are some photos and clothes of him that help me to always remember him.

I have included these objects in my Memory Box so as to make my husband's memory live forever. I wanted to share his story with the wider public. I also hope that in the future the government will use these objects to build a museum so that the people become aware of the pain and suffering our county has endured and to finally learn how to live in peace.



A Mother's Vision Blurred By Death

Farida's brother in-law, Qudratullah, was an 18 years-old student living in the Chehil Suton area of Kabul when he was forcibly conscripted during the government of Dr. Najibullah. He was dispatched to fight the Mujahidin insurgents and in one of the battles between the Afghan army and the Mujahidin in Deh Sabz, Kabul, Qudratullah was killed.

Qudratullah was the fourth son of his family. Even while he was still at school, he was financially supporting them through part time work. He wished to become an engineer but war and violence did not allow for his dream to come true, in the process shattering the life of his entire family. His death was costly for his mother more than for anyone else. The death of her young son opened up a deep wound that severely damaged her spirit. For a long time, his mother cried and mourned day in, day out. She could not accept that Qudratullah was gone and would never come back. The constant crying eventually began to blur her vision. The world had come to an end for her and nothing would ever change that.

Naturally, the death of Qudratullah also had a deep impact on his father. His father was already old and frail but the death of his young son further damaged his body and soul. Unlike his wife, he did not carry his pain on the outside but he gradually lost his capacity to work and soon passed away. As a result, poverty and hunger overcame the family. Later, the family of Qudratullah yet again suffered from the violence of war when their home came under rocket attack and they were forcibly displaced. Today, after years of suffering, they managed to return to a life remotely resembling normalcy. Yet, the horrors of war continue to cast a huge, disturbing shadow over them.



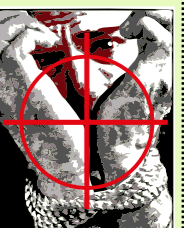
The Story Of Farida

My name is Farida. I am 40 years old. I live in Chehil Sutun where we have spent the past 20 years. We did not have a good life at the time my brother-in-law Qudratullah was killed in 1988. He was killed during the fighting between the forces of Dr. Najibullah and the Mujahidin. He was 18 years old and in 12th grade when he was conscripted into the army to fight the insurgents. One day, somebody came and informed us that Qudaratullah had been injured and that he was in a hospital nearby. We quickly ran to the hospital, but it was too late. We took his dead body and buried him in Chehil Sutun.

Another brother-in-law of mine, Hayatullah, was also handicapped during the war. After heavy fighting broke out in the capital we were displaced to Logar province where we lived in a tent for a while. When we finally came back to Kabul our house was totally destroyed as a result of the fighting among various Mujahidin factions. We then migrated to Iran because of the Taliban and only returned home after their regime had collapsed.

Upon arrival we were told that the government would provide us with a new home and land but so far nothing has been given to returnees and the families of the victims. The government must provide some form of support to the returnees. If not, how will they survive? People have lost everything during the war. I have a handicapped brother-in-law. I have daughters and a son and we are poor.

Most importantly, the memories of our loved ones should be preserved and respected. Their memories should serve as a lesson for others.





About The Futility Of Using Words To Describe War

War is full of irrationality. It causes deep injuries to the hearts of mothers and fathers and makes them eternally grieve for their lost children. It takes away a happy and prosperous life and replaces it with pain and suffering. Afghanistan is the country of pain, torment and injustice. Its people have become prisoners of the inhumane logic of violence. Here, horrendous atrocities have occurred one after another for many years in every corner of this country, subsequently breaking the spirit of its population and causing serious, unhealed wounds in people's hearts. With every day that passes, more people lose their lives while the hope for a better future dies a painful death. Why is this happening to this beautiful country? The secret of this puzzle is yet to be found and the dark cloud that has cast its shadow over the population has yet to be removed.

The story of war in Afghanistan is the story of pain and suffering. One of the people who understand this intimately is Mah Jan. She is the perfect image of a war victim. She has lost everything and her mind is like an archive of the endless suffering of the Afghan people. An archive as thick as an encyclopedia that contains every existing story of war ever told.

Mah Jan could be considered the perfect and complete Afghan. She has experienced it all and only people like her know exactly what tragedy means and what kind of life war brings about. Only people like her can distinguish whether war is something good or bad. She is the face of the Afghan people. She hardly speaks about her pain because she does not trust anyone is interested in listening to her. However, in the few moments when she does speak out, it is not just words that come out. Mah Jan takes you to another world where the word loses its intermediate role. She makes you encounter the naked truth. The words in her mouth lose its verbal nature and her entire body speaks with you. Her face of sadness reveals all the hidden secrets. There is not even a need for her to open her mouth. Her facial lines and languished hands, her hollowed eyes and crushed spirit they all speak to you. She speaks in thousands of languages to



you about her pain. The words are limited exclusively to express her suffering. Her disturbed soul does not fit into the framework of words. In her speech words do not connote any meaning beyond their most basic implications. Her story resembles the metaphor of the 'speechless dreamer and the deaf'. Neither is she capable of communicating her painful story nor do we have the ability to truly absorb it.



The Story of Mah Jan



My name is Mah Jan. During the war, I lost two of my sons, my husband, my brother-in-law and a number of my cousins. I lost everything. I was living in Chehil Sutun, Kabul. Later we were displaced to Logar and Khair Kahan. We could not afford to leave the country. One of my sons was killed in Chehil Sutun and the other one in Logar province. I had not seen the latter for three years when I was finally told to go to

Logar to see him. I was taken to a cemetery and informed that my son was buried there. As I could not afford to transfer his body to another graveyard, I accepted for him to remain there. My first son, Abdurrafi was killed in 1997 and the second one was killed the following year.

When I came back from Logar, we first moved to Shiwaki but later we returned to my home in Chehil Sutun, as I loved my home. When we moved back we saw that nothing was left. Everything had been taken including the doors and windows. Apparently, the people from the checkpoint took them. It was during the Taliban time.

One day, I decided to clean the home. I had yet to finish my cleaning when a rocket landed. I became worried about my son as I had just sent him out to buy some things. A few minutes later, my neighbor came and told me that my son had been injured and that I should go to the hospital. It was in the afternoon. I saw my older son on the street and he asked me what had happened. I told him that Abdul Wahid had been injured. He began to cry and the two of us went to the hospital in Allawoddin. As we entered the main corridor of the hospital, I saw a dead body. I stopped and uncovered his face. His shoes were placed under his head. I realized that it was my son. I cleaned his blood with my chadari and we took him home. It was late afternoon. The whole night I cried and cried. I lost two of my sons.

Two months later my brother-in-law was killed in Ghazni. He was working there. My husband buried his sons and brother. He was going every now and then to cry over their graves until he got paralyzed. For six years he could not move until he finally died. I took care of him. I washed him two times a week and gave him food every day. I lost two of my sons, my husband and my brother-in-law. A widowed woman married my third son and then they disappeared. I never saw him again. I now have only one son with whom I currently live. He has a shop. Every day he works hard to feed us. I used to work in other people's homes as cleaner and care taker. I did all kind of work to support my family.

My first son was 18 or 19-year-old when he was killed. The second was only 16 years old. The younger one used to work in a shop and sometimes he collected food from the trash cans and brought it home for us to eat. After coming back to our home, we used to live in a home without doors and windows. We were in Chehil Sutun when the war intensified. There were checkpoints everywhere therefore we went to Shiwaki.

My situation further deteriorated when my husband was handicapped after he suffered a paralysis. In his last days, I swear to God that we had nothing to eat. Once I cleaned the flour bag and prepared some bread for him. I mixed it with oil and put in his mouth. Now there are three people left in our home, my son, my daughter and myself.

There are very few things left behind from my sons. An old shoe from my older son, which is very valuable to me. I have also kept his hat. One of my sons did not even have proper clothes. I am not lying. When he was killed, I bought 7 meters of fabric to cover his body. I took it everywhere but no one accepted to sew it. His clothes were full of blood. When the people took it, he was totally naked.





Questions About The Nature Of War

The translation of painful experiences into words is very difficult. Words have many limitations, especially when trying to express pain. Pain is a strong feeling and a word a mere, insufficient means to describe it. There is a huge gap between the feeling and its interpretation. Therefore, the assumption of making the experience of war understandable through verbal expression is fundamentally flawed. The tragedy of war is deeply linked to personal experiences and what war imposed on Rahima is indescribable.

Rahima is the victim of the fate that war imposed on her. She does not understand what war means and why human beings go to war. Yet, she certainly understands the horrible consequences of war. Hence, for Rahima war is the most evil kind of action humankind can engage in. What could possibly justify the killing of one human being by another? Why do houses and properties of people have to be destroyed? Why, instead of generating pain and suffering for millions, should one not think of prosperity and happiness for all? Why do those involved in war not think about its devastating consequences? Why do they not think of all the children who lose their parents through violent means? Why does an oppressed person like Rahima who has nothing except the sky she lives under has to be further disturbed by war? Why are the perpetrators of violence not scared of the blood on their hands? Is there no alternative to violent conflict resolution?

These and other questions often disturb Rahima. And since nobody seems to be willing to answer these questions, she has begun to find her own answers. She knows that victims of war will always live on the margins of history and that no one looks at the world through the lens of the victims. She knows that no one puts himself/herself in the shoes of victims in order to truly understand the experiences and suffering they have endured.

Rahima has also thought of potential solutions. For her, the solution is to tell, recall preserve and protect the memories of the victims. Memories are the only things people like Rahima possess. These memories are not meant to be preserved to wage further war nor are they aimed at taking revenge. On the contrary, people like Rahima use them to make their own contributions to stop and prevent war. According to her, the memories preserved by the victims are the only instrument that reveals their endless pain and suffering. They awaken the human consciousness and ultimately contribute to the prevention of further atrocities.

Rahima's Story

My name is Rahima and I am 50 years old. I have lost four of my family members during the Taliban time. It has been 17 years now that my husband and my 10-year old son were killed. There was war in Kabul and we eventually fled to Mazar-e- Sharif, which is where we were when our home was looted back in Kabul. Three years later my husband was killed. Afterwards, we lived for another three years in Mazar-e- Sharif and from there we moved to Jalalabad. Later on, we came back to Kabul.

It was the night of Eid and my poor husband and son were out looking for work when they were killed. My husband used to work as a day laborer in Hairatan. He usually came back home after 15-20 days. That night, when they were coming home the Taliban fired on them. Their bodies were totally mutilated.

At the time my husband was killed, I had five children. After his death we faced a lot of problems. I started to work as a tailor and my daughter and son were working in an educational center. My eldest son was 14 years old and I had two more children of 3 years and 3 months.

When we lived in Jalalabad the situation further deteriorated. There was no work and we lived in a rented house. If we were unable to find a piece of bread during the day then we had nothing to eat during the night. Besides, we had no one to look after us. I worked in the house of a Hindu as a cleaner and we finally moved back to Kabul, even though the Taliban were in power.

Back in Kabul, not a single moment passed without hardship. It was difficult to eat properly as the little money we had was spent on renting the house. My children were still too small and they often asked how their father was killed. They missed their father a lot. Sometimes, I sat down with them and told them stories about their father.

My husband's name was Haidar Khan. He was 58 years old when he

was killed. My son was only 10 years old when he got killed. I was his second wife. He was an ordinary person and had nothing to do with politics. Now all I can do is to look after my children.

Unfortunately, nothing is left behind from my son. However, I have kept my husband's spoon, his plate and a photo of him. These objects are all very important to me. I am giving these things to you to let others know about the difficulties we have faced in our lives and that the situation is still not improving. The weather is already cold and we have no heater. My son is jobless. My children cannot go to school because we are poor.





Victims Of Jihad

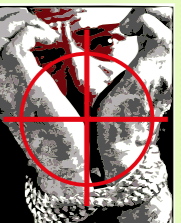


Ramazan Ali was very excited about Jihad. He felt that Jihad is fighting for the way of God, a way that leads to happiness. He would call himself a true follower of God. Rahima was supporting her husband because of her love for him. She did know much about Jihad. She came to know about it through her husband and wanted to help her husband in this “holy violence”. But taking part in Jihad had severe consequences for Ramazan. He was imprisoned because of his ideology, was badly tortured and eventually gave his life without having been prepared for martyrdom. No one knows how he was killed. Perhaps, he died from the effects of torture.



After Ramazan Ali’s death, his wife and three children were left behind without any support or financial means. From morning to night and night to dawn they were in search of a piece of bread. Rahima knocked on door after door to find work as she did not want to see her children living in chronic poverty. But no one seemed to care. No one invited them to their wedding parties and though people easily talked of compassion their lack of such mercy in practice came down on Rahima like a hammer on her head. She sacrificed her entire life to provide for her children.

It is this aspect of holy war that Ramazan seems to have failed to consider. His excitement about taking part in Jihad turned him blind to its severe implications for the rest of his family. If he were alive today, he could listen to the suffering of his wife and children. He could intimately familiarize himself with their untold story. If he was alive today, perhaps, he would choose another way of attaining prosperity.





The Story of Ramazan Ali

It was the last year of Dr. Najibullah's government. During the month of Ramadan. Shortly after dinner my husband began praying. We did not know that our house was under surveillance. Suddenly, we heard suspicious movements. When we came out of the house, the yard was full of people. More than 50 soldiers came into our house. They started to beat my husband. The reason was that he was a Mujahid. They arrested him and took him away. He was detained in Sadarat and we were not allowed to meet him. We could go there only to deliver his clothes. I went to Sadarat and waited for days to see my husband but they did not allow me to see him. I even begged each and every soldier and officer to make an exception but to no avail.

After six months, he was transferred to Puli Charkhi prison where he spent another year. Once again I was not allowed to see him. After one year, he wrote us a letter and sent us his ring and some other things. In that letter, he mentioned that he had been transferred from the second floor of Block 2 to Block 3. He also indicated in his letter that if he was no longer found in Block 3, we should stop looking for him. He suggested that his children should be sent to learn the holy Quran.

After we received his letter, I went to Puli Charkhi prison on several occasions. Every time, the prison officials told me that nobody with his name was imprisoned there. Then, the last time I went there, they told me that my husband had been executed and handed over his personal belongings to me. We never saw his dead body. He was killed seven years after our marriage. It was after his death when our truly bad days began and I was obliged to do all kinds of hard work including cleaning, washing and ironing to support my family and children. We also lived for 13 years as refugees in Iran.

I still preserve my memories of Ramazan, the worst being when I was told that he had been executed. Coming back home, I was so desperate and sad. My younger daughter asked me what happened and I told her that her father was no longer alive. She began to shout and cry for a long time. Since then, I have never seen her cry again. In those days, I was working day and night while continuing to mourn the death of my husband. Some nights my younger son and I cried together. Sometimes my son cleaned my tears and told me that I could be his father too.

Another sad moment in my life was the day when my husband was arrested and he was handcuffed. There was a place in our home where he hid but the soldiers found him. He was handcuffed and beaten up in front of me and the children. My husband told me not to worry and that nothing would happen to him. When he was taken away, I saw the tears in his eyes. Afterwards, I never saw him again. I will never forget that moment.

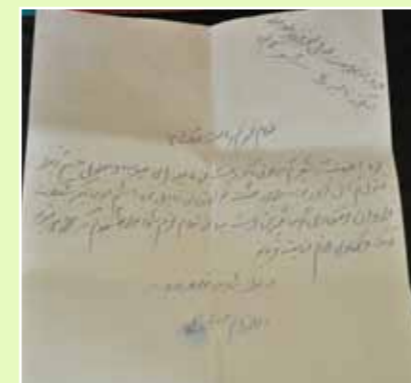




A Survivor Of The Mazar-e- Sharif Genocide

Suhaila is one of the survivors of the Mazar-e- Sharif genocide carried out by the Taliban. As a result of this genocide, 13 of her family members were killed, including her father and brother while Suheila was severely beaten up. Only two of the 13 dead relatives were later found and given a proper burial. She still does not know where the rest of her family members were buried. At times, she misses her father a lot and it is in those moments of difficulty that she would like to visit her father's grave and complain to him about the hardships of her life. But she does not even know where her father's grave is. A fact that deeply disturbs her.

Her only solace is a pearl box that her father made for her and she never abandons even for a minute. It is her most valuable reminder of him. A way for her to keep the memory of her father alive forever. It is also a symbol of all the evils of war. An evil that takes away the lives of loved ones and separates sons and daughters from their fathers, ending the kindest of all human relationships. Sometimes these fathers disappear and their children have no idea about their whereabouts. Other times, it is the parents who are deprived of seeing their children again. For Suheila the pearl box represents a symbol for all those children who lost their fathers during Afghanistan's many decades of war. She wants to keep it in her own museum to let the present and future generations know about her pain and suffering. In her view, the pearl box symbolizes the rejection of violence as a means to resolve conflict.



Suhaila's Story

My father had just finished his lunch and gone back to work on his piece of land. In those times we had a lot of land and even owned a tractor. One day, the Taliban came and asked him to get down from the tractor without turning off the engine. They then went on and handcuffed him. When my brother came to see what was going on the Taliban arrested him too. Until today, I do not know what happened to them and how they were killed. Only one of my uncles survived. He told me that my father was killed and that he buried him but I never saw my father's dead body. What I heard later is that the Taliban killed my father and brother with one single shot as they did not want to waste any bullets.

We escaped from our house as the Taliban closed in on the area that we were living at the time. We returned back home after a few days. The Taliban had attacked our village and taken whatever they could find. All the houses in our village had been burnt. Nothing was left in our homes as the Taliban had torched them all. The only thing I found was the pearl box that my father made for me while he was imprisoned during Najibullah's regime. Since then, I have never let go of it and I am always very cautious not to lose it since it is very valuable for me. I decided to use it for the Memory Box project. This box is the most important thing in my life as it is the only thing left from my father.

The Taliban killed 13 family members of mine including my father, brother, uncles and cousins. Only two of them were found and buried.



When Homes Turn Into Graveyards

Shirin Gul is not the only woman whose house was destroyed over the past three decades of war in Afghanistan though all houses destroyed in Kabul resemble that of Shirin Gul. The injuries visible to the walls of the houses mirror the injuries inflicted onto the bodies of its residents.

During the various conflicts, in particular the one between the different Mujahidin factions, the houses in Kabul were no longer people's shelters but rather their graves prepared in advance -albeit on the surface. There was always the possibility of a rocket or artillery shelling destroying people's homes. None of the houses were beyond the reach of violence and neither were they durable enough to protect their inhabitants against the persistent attacks. These ruined houses became a refuge for death, making his home among the many people buried in the rubble of their own homes. The whole of Kabul was turned into a gigantic graveyard.

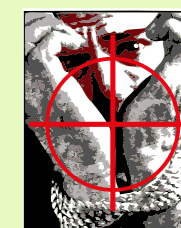
Shirin Gul was one of those people whose house was bombed and took her life during the civil war in the 1990s. It happened on an evening where she attempted to defy the terror of war, by holding a small reception to bring back the happiness of former times to what had by then become a city of ghosts. She did not expect that her home would one day become a slaughterhouse and that her reception would end in terrible tragedy. Shirin Gul had invited her son-in-law and brother-in-law to an evening reception. They had just begun their supper when a stray rocket fired by the Taliban hit the exact room where the reception was taking place, immediately killing Shirin Gul and her two guests. The death of Shirin Gul marked the end of happiness for her children. Her husband did not marry again and dedicated himself to take care of his mother-less children.



The Story of Shirin Gul

My name is Safia and I am 42 years old. I am living in Dugh Abad area of Dasht-e- Barchi. During the war, I lost three members of my family: My mother, my cousin and my brother-in-law. My whole family including my son-in-law and my cousins were in our home when a rocket hit our house and killed them. I was not personally present when the incident happened. According to my family members, their bodies were ripped to pieces and it was almost impossible to identify them. My cousin had a two-month old child who died soon after his father's untimely death. His wife had no option but to return to her father's home. My mother left behind six children, 2 sons and four girls. Today, my father is old and my sisters are mentally unstable. One of my sisters left her husband and children because of these mental problems. Now she does not recognize anyone anymore. I am not mentally stable either. I was desperate after the death of my mother. She loved me a lot.

The worst moment in my life was when I heard about the death of my mother. After she died, no one ever properly welcomed me in my father's home anymore and this made me so disappointed.



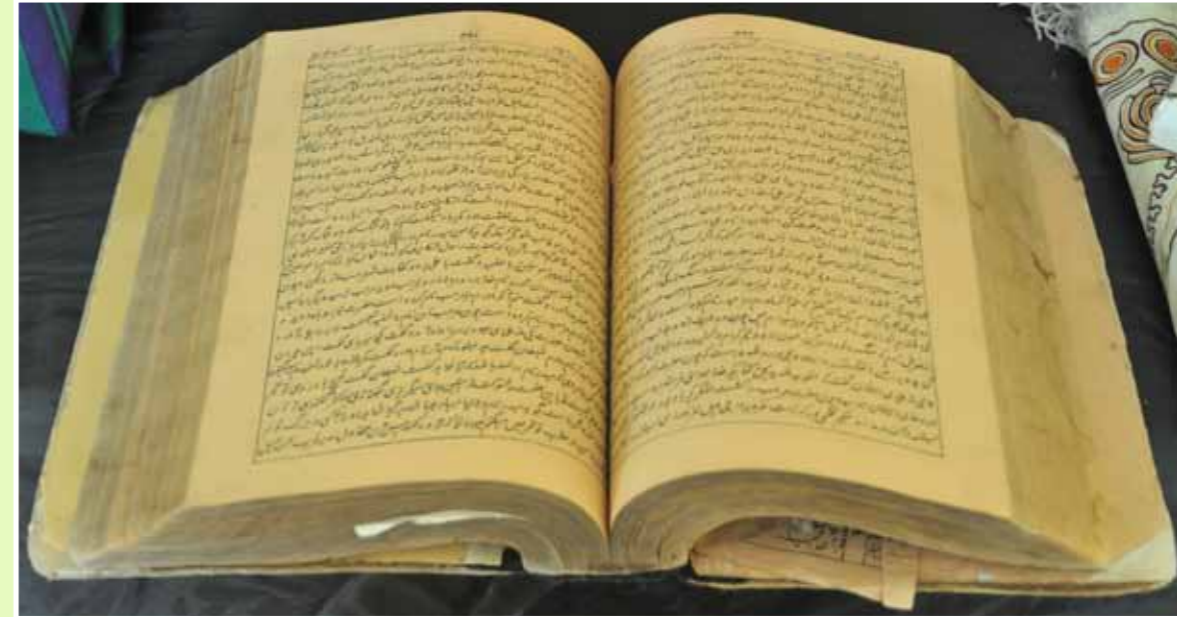


The Girl Who Took On The Role Of Her Father

Alia was only 10 years old when her father was killed. Her father was a clergy with a great deal of influence at the local level. He was known as a peace-loving person and thoroughly rejected the notion of war as a means to resolve conflict. Not only did he not participate in any war but he actively tried to prevent people from resorting to any form of violence. In his view, war was the source of destruction and brutalities and hence unjustifiable both from a religious as well as rational perspective. According to him, no society could ever be built by war, which is why he actively carried out campaigns against war by reciting verses of the Quran and conducting religious rituals.

When the Taliban attacked the Hazarajat region of Afghanistan, Alia's father once again tried to raise the flag of peace. He gathered the local elders and other influential people to negotiate a settlement with the Taliban. They literally raised a white flag as they approached them. But the Taliban paid no attention to their call for peace and did not even allow them to put forward their requests. On the contrary, they fired and killed all of them including Alia's father. Later, his body was found with his ring finger cut off.

Alia's father left behind four daughters and a son. Alia was the eldest of them. Naturally, none of them were old enough to work in order satisfy their basic human needs. Later, during the patriarchal regime of the Taliban, it was almost impossible for women and girls to work outside the house. As a result, Alia and her sisters suffered a great deal as they had no regular income and were hence trapped in chronic poverty. Eventually they migrated to Pakistan, where they started to work in a carpet factory. With the money they earned they went to Iran, where they spent a few years before finally returning to Afghanistan. Alia's sisters got married and so did her brother while Alia assumed the role of her father, giving Quran lessons to meet her and her mother's financial needs.



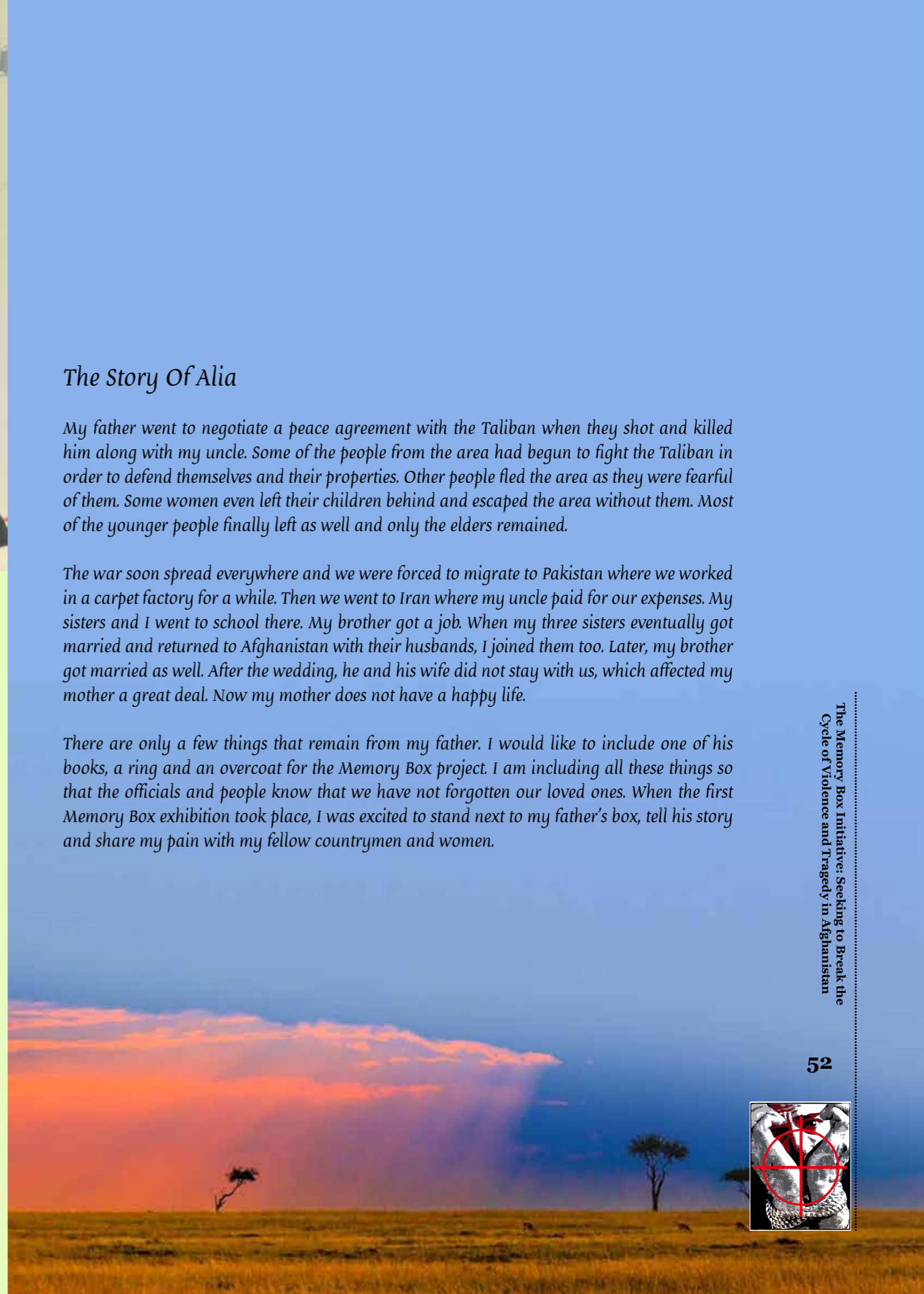
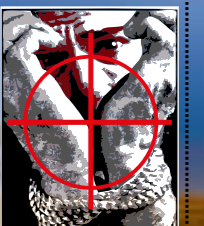
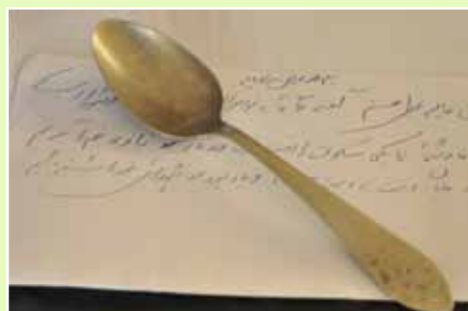


The Story Of Alia

My father went to negotiate a peace agreement with the Taliban when they shot and killed him along with my uncle. Some of the people from the area had begun to fight the Taliban in order to defend themselves and their properties. Other people fled the area as they were fearful of them. Some women even left their children behind and escaped the area without them. Most of the younger people finally left as well and only the elders remained.

The war soon spread everywhere and we were forced to migrate to Pakistan where we worked in a carpet factory for a while. Then we went to Iran where my uncle paid for our expenses. My sisters and I went to school there. My brother got a job. When my three sisters eventually got married and returned to Afghanistan with their husbands, I joined them too. Later, my brother got married as well. After the wedding, he and his wife did not stay with us, which affected my mother a great deal. Now my mother does not have a happy life.

There are only a few things that remain from my father. I would like to include one of his books, a ring and an overcoat for the Memory Box project. I am including all these things so that the officials and people know that we have not forgotten our loved ones. When the first Memory Box exhibition took place, I was excited to stand next to my father's box, tell his story and share my pain with my fellow countrymen and women.





A Wedding Ceremony That Never Took Place

When war becomes widespread, no one is immune to it. War reserves a share for everyone and those who survive it have many stories to tell. What all these stories

have in common is that they happened in a situation of absolute emergency. In those times nothing is normal and chaos reigns. At the same time, people's pains and suffering are not fully equal. Similarities can be drawn but each victim of violence has his or her own distinctive story. Some are hurt because their children were killed while others were subjected to forced displacement. Yet others are left behind without any support, suffering in solitude. War retains a different fate for different people.

The story of Mohammad Sarwar is that of all those young men and women whose wedding ceremony never took place. Mohammad Sarwar was 20 years old when he was forcibly conscripted during the government of the last communist president, Dr. Najibullah. He was deployed to Panjsher valley. There he served for a year and later came back home to spend his holidays with his family. During the visit, Sarwar got engaged. He happily returned to military duty hoping to come back soon and hold his wedding party. He even bought all the things needed for the ceremony. Exactly 20 days after he had reassumed his military duty, his family was informed of his death. It was shocking news for everyone. His father later fell off the roof of his house and remained severely handicapped for the rest of his life. Hence, his mother was forced to carry the pain of both her deceased son and her handicapped husband. Ever since, the death of her young son has occupied her entire being and she never again attended any wedding party of friends or family members as these reminded her of her son's premature death.



The Story Of Sarwar's Mother

My son was only 18 years old when he was taken to military service under Najibullah's rule. He was killed a year later. First, he used to serve in Kabul and then transferred to the Panjshir valley. He spent two months there and then got killed. During a year of military service, he came home only once. He always reassured us that one day his service would end and he would come back home. Two days before the official end of service, he got killed. He was buried in Khaja Bughra before we even came to know about his death. Later, we opened his grave and saw him one last time.

The death of Sarwar has severely affected our lives as he was our only son and breadwinner. We have suffered a great deal and I have been crying for my son day and night ever since he died. For a while, my husband was able to work and sustain the family but he had to stop working 9 years ago due to old age. Now, we have no one to support us.

I still hold on to my son's spoon and plate as well as his old blanket, a watch and a ring. I have kept these objects to remember my son, especially the ring. When his clothes were returned to us after his death, his ring was attached to them.





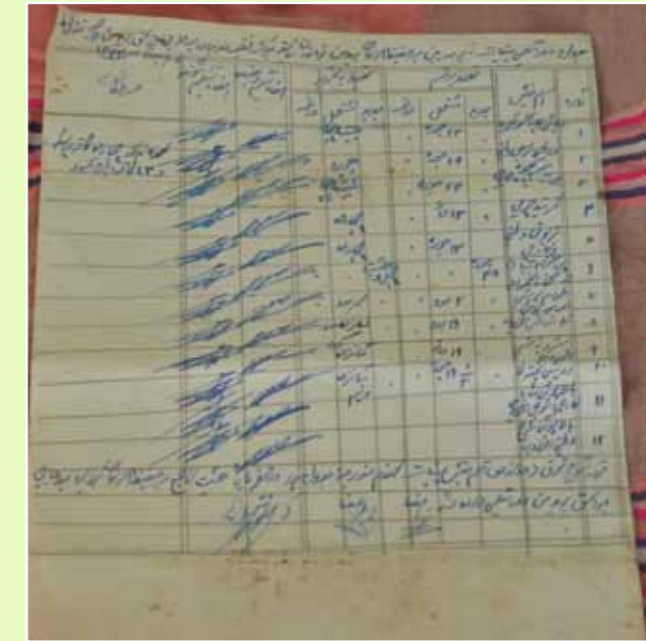
The Tearful Eyes Of A Young Woman

Karima was very young when her father Hafiz was taken away from home. At that time no one knew what was going on. Suddenly, a number of people with their faces covered entered the house and took Hafiz. They did not even allow Hafiz to change his clothes and put on his shoes. Afterwards, the abductors never contacted Hafiz' family and they remained in the dark about the reasons for his forced departure. Shortly after, the family came to know that the people who abducted Hafiz were from one of the Mujahidin groups. Hafiz' only crime had been that he was working for the government. Until today, his family does not know what happened to him but he never returned.

After Hafiz' abduction, his family lived in absolute misery. His only son was forced to work during the early days of his childhood. He later lost his sanity due to a number of serious psychological problems while Karima's mother suffered a heart attack during the time of the Taliban. As the Taliban banned treatment of female patients by male physicians, she later lost her life in the hospital. Karima was a witness to all these painful events.

She is now 30 years old and never shows any signs of energy and happiness. She cannot stop crying. Karima got used to suffering from her early days and the endless cycle of violent incidents in her life has turned this suffering into a routine experience. She does not know what she did to deserve this fate but strongly believes that she has suffered more than any one else in this world. Are those who ignited the fire of war even thinking of the burned life of Karima?

The Memory Box project aims to document stories of people like Karima and make them part of the official history of Afghanistan. The Memory Box project is a window into the lives of victims who tell their stories as they have experienced them. Without making an effort to look at the consequences of war through the lens of the victims, it will be difficult to truly grasp the hidden realities of war. Hence, we need to clean our eyes, look through their lens and listen to their suffering and countless pains.



The history of Afghanistan has so far been written without the voices of the victims. These voices need to be made heard. Stories like the one of Karima reflect but a small part of everything that Afghan victims have endured in recent decades.



The Story Of Karima

My name is Karima and I am 30 years old. I lost my father during the war. I was only 4 years old when my father disappeared. I cannot remember it in detail. I can recall only that some people with their faces covered broke into our house and took my father away. They did not even let my father change his clothes and put on his shoes. After he disappeared, we did not know what happened to him. My mother searched everywhere but could not find him. We assume that Hizb-e Islami abducted him as they were against those working for the government of the time. I remember, it was almost midnight when we heard a knock on our door. My mother opened it and these masked men came in and took my father still dressed in his pajamas. There were people all over the house including on the roof.

After his disappearance we experienced a great deal of difficulties. My brother, who was in grade six at the time had to start working to feed us. Soon after, he began to suffer from depression. Today he is absolutely mad but still asks for my father. He believes that my father is still alive.

Later on my mother died during the Taliban regime. This was the worst moment of my life (Karima cries). My mother was suffering from heart problems and later had a heart attack. We took her to different hospitals but there was no female doctor. The Taliban had banned male physicians from treating female patients. As a result, my mother died in Jamhuriat hospital. I cannot forget these terrible moments in my life. Therefore, I hate the Taliban.

Today, I work and feed my family. My sister works as a teacher though she does not have a permanent contract. My sister, my sick brother and I live together. One of my other sisters lives in Mazar-e- Sharif.

I fully support the Memory Box initiative. I want to keep my father's memory alive. I will not allow for him to be forgotten. Those who have killed my father must know that someone from his family is still alive and thinking of him. This initiative is dedicated to people like my dear father (Karima cries). People are telling me that I had a very handsome and kind father. My relatives told me they saw his Memory Box on TV. I am very pleased to see my father's memories alive.



About Crime And Punishment

The nature of war is inherently unjust, unequal and unfair. In war, one of the most problematic relationships is between crime and punishment. More often than not people are punished without having committed any crime while those who took part in crimes are never called to account. This sad fact is clear to almost everyone in Afghanistan and there is no need to consult the books of history to prove this. The destruction of Kabul city and the suffering of its residents are overwhelmingly evident even today, with both victims and perpetrators living side by side in this city formerly praised by kings and emperors for its immense beauty.

The truth is that committing crimes in Afghanistan has been a deeply rewarding endeavor, generally resulting in higher social status and admiration, effectively transforming the war criminal into a hero to be revered. Committing crimes brings more wealth and prosperity. On the other hand, there are those who have been punished in spite of their innocence. It is a paradox. The ones who kill and create pain and destruction enjoy better, more affluent lives, proudly posing in their mansions full of expensive luxuries. The ones who committed no crime live under the bridge, on the streets or in the ruins of their former homes, their children begging for a piece of bread. There are thousands of such stories, with many more secrets hiding under the broken skin of this decaying city. Each of those secrets tells a part of the “unjust situation”.

One of the most obvious examples of this “unjust situation” is the story of Mohammad Shafi. He is a person who quit his studies due to poverty and was forced to work in order to support his family. One day, he was killed on the way to Jalalabad without any apparent reason. Until today the death of Shafi is a mystery for his family. What they know is that Shafi had nothing to do with other people's dirty business. On the contrary, he was busy trying to put food on the table for his family when unknown people took him out of a vehicle on his way to Jalalabad. Shortly after his dead body was sent home to his family. What crime did Shafi commit? What was he punished for? How long shall these forms of arbitrary punishment continue in the capital of Afghanistan? These are the questions that the people of this city ask themselves day after day.





So far, no one of those in power has felt the need to answer these simple questions. In the meantime, crimes continue to go unpunished and the people's dream for the sun of justice to finally rise are slowly withering away. One thing is certain: Something must be done and the campaign for the promotion of justice in Afghanistan should be accelerated and intensified. The Memory Box project is one small step towards the realization of this dream. It is an attempt to bring the victims of injustice to the center of attention when Afghanistan's past, present and future is being discussed. It is a step towards the prevention of further crimes and tragedies.



The Story of Mah Parwar

My name is Mah Parwar and I am 40 years old. I live in Chehil Sutun, Kabul. Before the war, we used to live in Chardehi. I was 20 years old when violence broke out. We did not have a good life at that time but it became even worse once my brother was killed.

One day, he told us that he would be going to Jalalabad to fetch car spare parts. Just before he left we even joked about his trip. My brother loved jokes. We advised him not to go there but he insisted that he had nothing left to sell in his shop. He spent one night with my sister and her family in Waisal Abad and then went on to Jalalabad. We later learned that he was taken out of the car and killed in the Kaj Sher area of Jalalabad. The driver attempted to stop the murderers but failed. It was him who reported the murder of my brother to the 60th Battalion.

It was Eid night and my mother had gone to my uncle's home. My mother told them that Shafi had gone to Jalalabad when shortly after they were informed that Shafi had been injured and was brought to the Chardehi mosque. My mother and uncle immediately went there but could not find him. They then went from hospital to hospital and eventually found his dead body in the Ali Abad hospital. I later went to my uncle's home where I saw the dead body of my brother.





Hope Betrayed

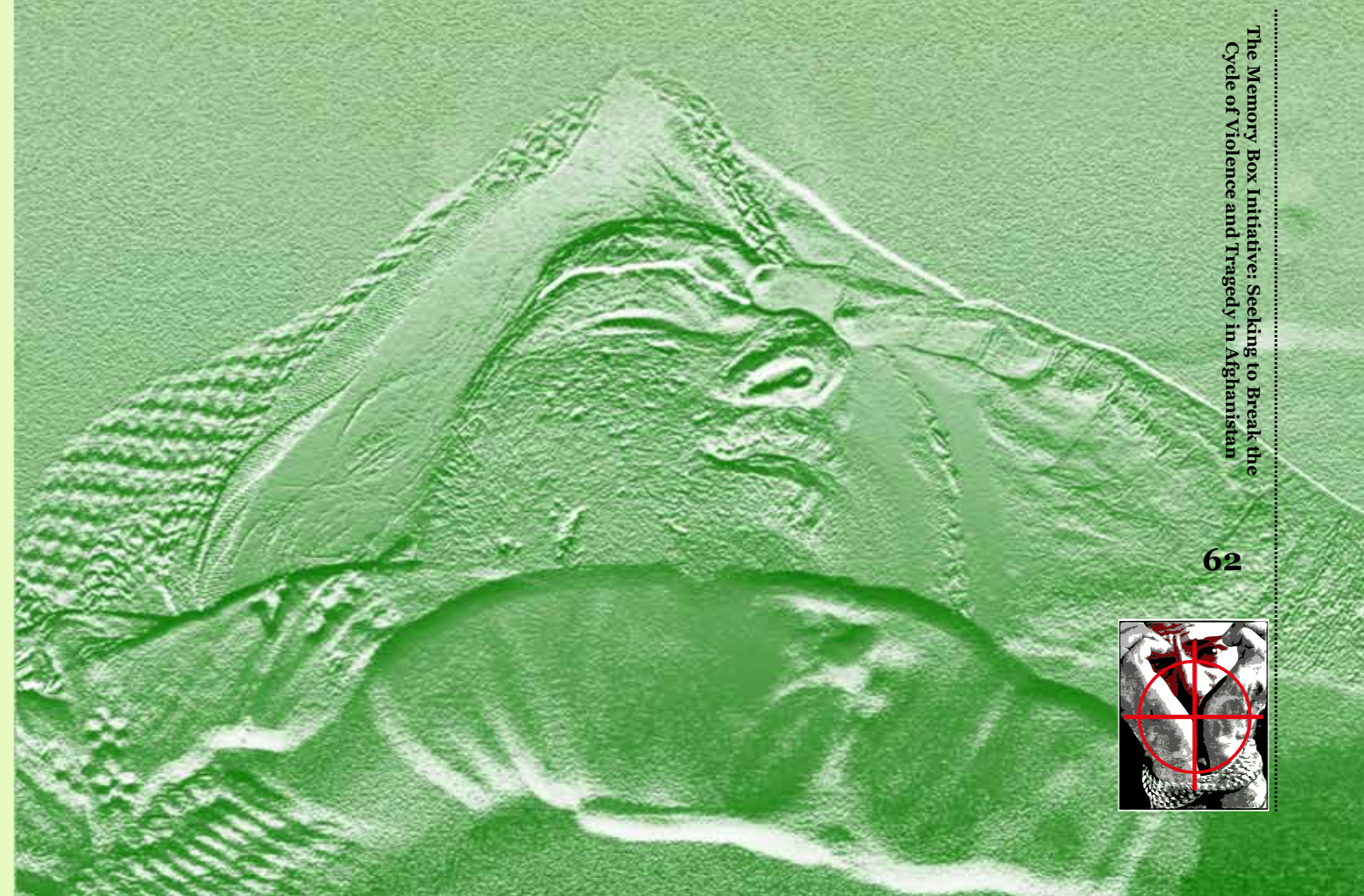
Periods of war are possibly the worst chapter in the thick history book of humankind. Generally, nothing affects the human spirit more than when the blood of a fellow being is innocently shed. But for some people, these moments of terrible violence increase their appetite for bloodshed and the killing of others turns into frenetic, orgasmic excitement. For these people, the hunger for destruction and looting never diminishes, eventually turning the taking of another person's life into an almost daily routine. What is more, the mere act of killing no longer satisfies the murderers. Hence, they begin to resort to different forms of torture, thereby constantly transforming the nature of violence as violent conflict continues over time.

One of these tragic deaths is the one of Bibi Zulikha. At the time of her murder, she was 45 years old and lived in Kart-e Parwan, Kabul. She was a kind mother and a reputable woman in the area. Everyone liked her and she was living a happy life with her family. Although she was concerned about the war and its consequences, she did not leave Kabul to take refuge in another place. She remained home hoping that the war would not come after her and her family. Unfortunately, things did not turn out that way.

One day, her house was destroyed and Bibi Zulikha was killed. The war between the Taliban and the government of Rabbani was intensifying when a rocket hit Bibi Zulikha's house, painting the walls red with with her blood and flesh. Her tragic death severely shocked her family, particularly her younger son, who began suffering severe psychotic problems that are still ongoing.

The Story Of Mahnaz

My name is Mahnaz and I am 27-years old. During the war, I lost my mother-in-law. She was at home when a rocket hit our house and killed her. My husband went to see what was going on and saw his mother's head shattered and spread all over. This tragic incident severely affected my husband and immediately after the mourning ceremony, we left Afghanistan. Until today my husband suffers from mental problems. I can say that he lost control over his mind. This all happened after the death of his mother.





The Trauma Of Rebuilding A Shattered Existence

One of the main tragedies of war is that it makes all kinds of atrocities possible. When a war begins, repeated catastrophic events eventually lead to an endless cycle of violence and suffering, depriving the people of any kind of prosperity and joy. War transforms suffering into a daily routine, thereby destroying the dreams of even the simplest of lives. Everything evaporates except war, destruction and suffering and life itself loses its inherent meaning and begins to resemble a hollow ditch that opens its mouth to devour everything.

Even when war finally comes to an end, the trauma of rebuilding one's life casts a huge shadow and further prevents a return to normality. In Afghanistan, generation after generation have grown up under the dark shadow of war. For many, war has by now been accepted as a way of living, thereby giving further life to the rule of swords, guns and suicide attacks and a society full of hatred and violence. Consequently, violence is no longer bound by time and space while the legacy of conflict is so overwhelming that post-conflict life is often more difficult than life during the violent event itself.

Qand Agha, the son of Negar is one of the victims of senseless war. He was not killed during the time of the civil war nor during the Taliban regime but as a result of a suicide attack under the current regime of president Karzai. He is the victim of a cycle of violence initiated decades before and likely to continue for years to come as the thousands of innocent deaths since 2001 prove that the roots of violence have not yet been totally wiped out. It seems that the dragons of death are not yet satisfied and that every now and then the city of Kabul must fill its stomach with more victims. The death of Qand Agha constitutes an explicit warning that the possibility of a return to full-fledged war and its tragedies should not be underestimated.

The Memory Box project is an explicit statement against the return of tragedy. It aims to shake the human consciousness and expose the tragic nature of violent conflict.



The Story Of Negar

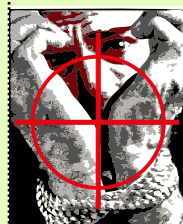
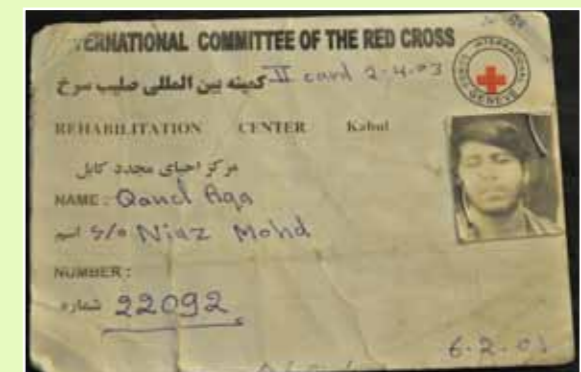
My name is Negar and I am 40 years old. Four years ago my son was killed in a suicide attack in Charahi Zanbaq in the city of Kabul. I now live in Chehil Sutun in very difficult circumstances. In the past, my life was much better, especially since my son was working.

One day, my son was asleep when I woke him up and told him to go to work as it was getting late. He asked me to let him sleep and covered himself with a blanket. After a while I sent my other son to go and remind him. He refused again but eventually someone called him on his mobile and he finally got up. He had not eaten well the night before and I brought him fresh rice to eat. Then, he took his jacket and left the house. It was late afternoon and he never came back. I borrowed my neighbor's cell phone and gave it to my younger son to call him. When my son called somebody else answered his telephone and informed us that Qand Agha had been injured. Later my husband came home and confirmed that he was injured. My son was hospitalized for one month. Every time I visited him at the hospital, he asked me not to cry, ensuring me that he would recover soon. After a month, he passed away and his dead body was returned home.

My son was a really funny person. He was working somewhere as a security guard but I don't know exactly where. I do not remember which month he was killed but I do remember it was winter. He had received his salary only once and was waiting for his second salary when he died. Before, he used to work as a street seller and later he became a bus conductor. His father was old and could not fully support the family.

My son was always telling me that one day he would buy a house for us. Whenever he saw the car of a newly wed couple covered with flowers, he jokingly promised he would get married soon. I remember that I cooked rice that day when he was injured. He ate but left home hungry and often complained of hunger during his month in the hospital.

His cloth was torn into pieces. I still keep it as a memory of him. I want you to use his stuff for the Memory Box exhibition.





There Is Nothing Holy About War

Haji Ewaz was excited about Jihad. For him, Jihad was a form of holy struggle that cleans the spirit of the individual and society at large. Haji Ewaz knew that Jihad must first take place inside oneself before it can spread to the outside world. Hence, he was preaching Jihad in order to fight the regime. From his point of view, Jihad was good and those who engaged in it, the Mujahidin, were the best people in the world. The truth is that he was not involved in Jihad for his personal benefit but as a result of his faith and deep convictions.

Haji Ewaz sacrificed his life for Jihad but he did not live long enough to witness its final results: The destruction of Kabul, the pain and suffering it generated, the destruction of thousands of homes and the burial of women and children under the collapsed walls and roofs of their own residences. Neither did Haji Ewaz live long enough to witness how the Mujahidin wiped out an entire city and its dwellers. He had an idealized image of Jihad in mind. He felt that Jihad is the source of life and that only through Jihad the country could be saved. But he did not live long enough to see how Jihad produced only destruction and suffering for the people of Afghanistan.

Haji Ewaz engaged in Jihad and sacrificed his life for it but what was holy and emancipatory for him soon turned into an evil for his children as the Mujahidin did not only not follow his model but later killed two of his sons.



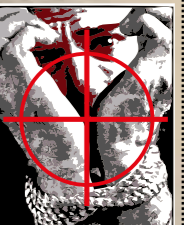
The Story of Safura

My name is Safura. I lost my father-in-law during the war. I also lost my brother-in-law. We used to have shops and properties before the war began. When my father-in-law was killed, there was no one in our home to take care of us.

My father-in-law Haji Ewaz used to be a Mujahid. One day, unknown people came and inspected our home and took my uncle away. He was imprisoned in Sedarat for six months and then spent another year in Puli Charki prison. Later we were informed that he had been executed and we should come and get his clothes.

Among the things that they gave me, there was a blanket, a pair of scissors, a mirror and a bed sheet. His bed sheet was full of blood. I asked them why his bed sheet was full of blood but they did not answer. My husband was in Herat at that time. Later two of my brother-in-laws were killed. Nader Ali, 30 years old, and Dawood, 14. My husband was shattered when he learned about the death of his father and two brothers. Since then, our life has been very difficult.

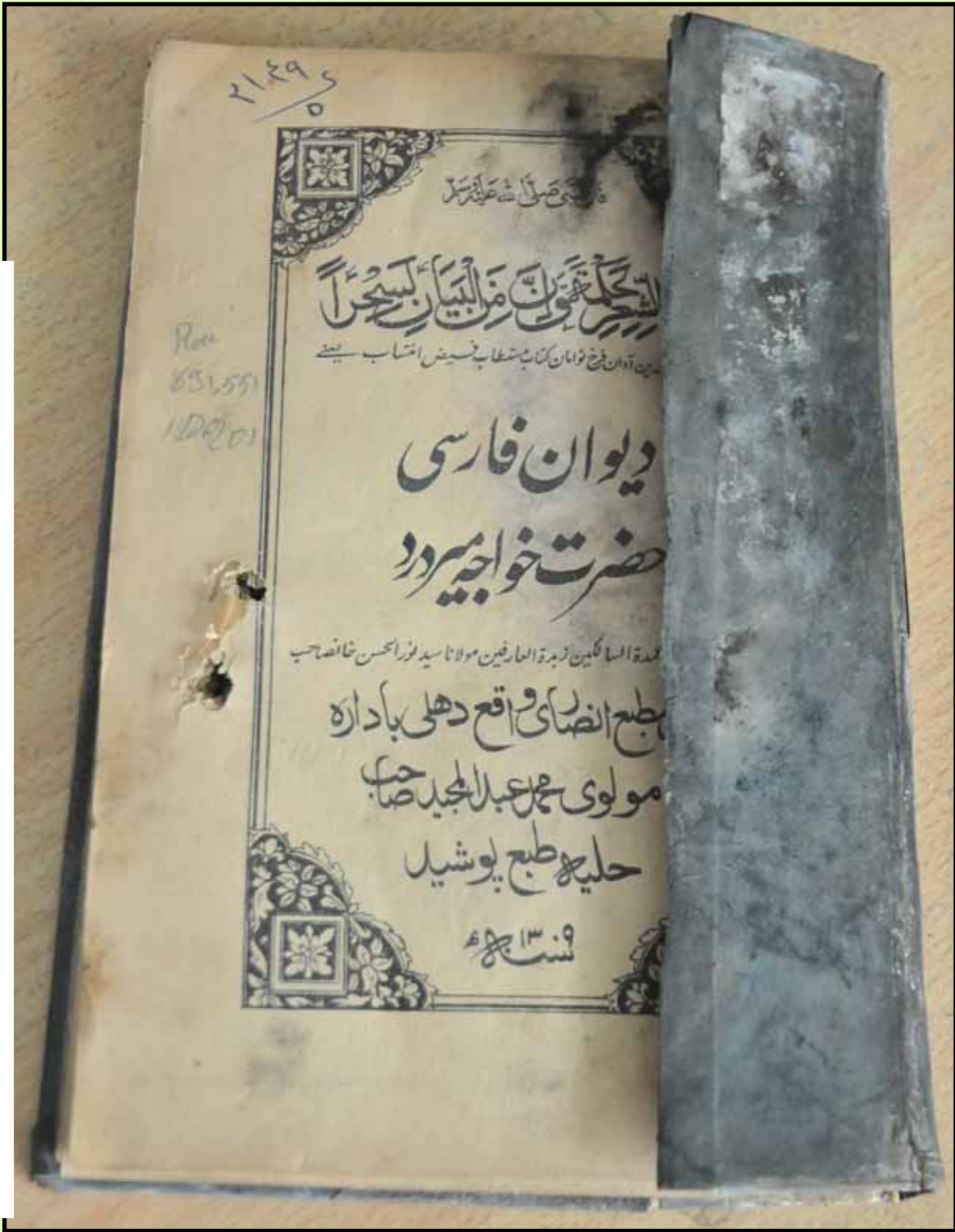
I brought a number of things to contribute to the Memory Box project. These objects were left behind by my father-in-law and brother-in-laws. There are a turban, a blanket, a scissor and a measurement tape. I hope their memories will remain alive forever.



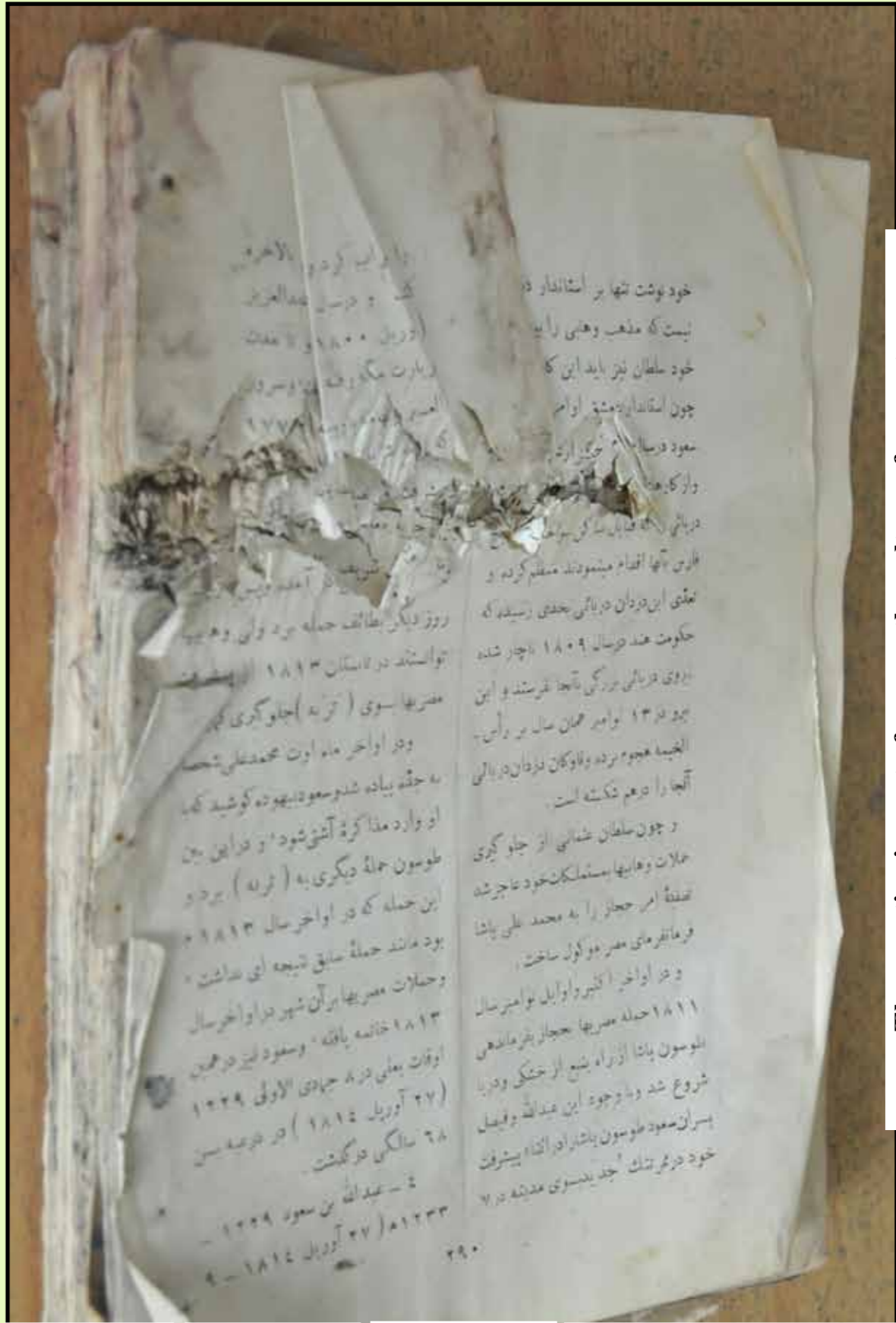




The negative impact of war on the culture of a country

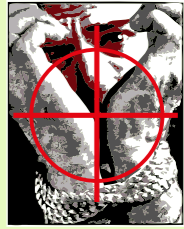


The negative impact of war on the culture of a country

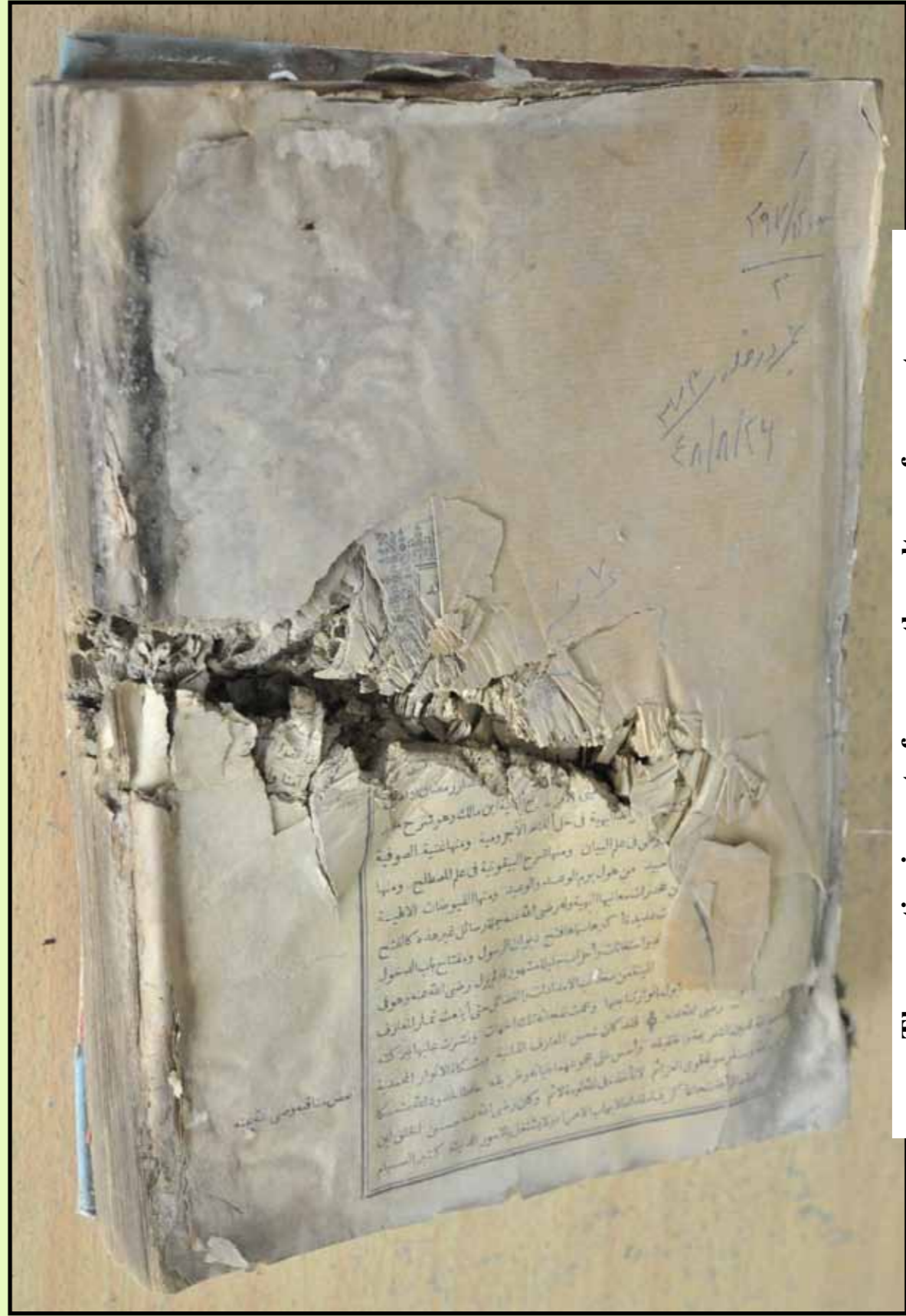




The negative impact of war on the culture of a country



The negative impact of war on the culture of a country





The Memory Box Initiative: Seeking To Break the Cycle of Violence and Tragedy in Afghanistan



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Media Reports on the Memory Box Initiative

8 am News

Etilaat-e-Roz News

Mandegar News

Eslaah News

Hewad News

Anis National News



The Memory Box Initiative: Seeking to Break the Cycle of Violence and Tragedy in Afghanistan

