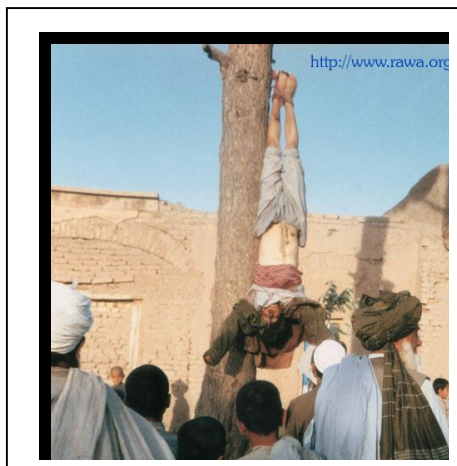


Genocide  
OF  
**Hazaras**  
In Afghanistan  
By  
**TALIBAN**

Compiled by:

**M.A. Gulzari**  
5<sup>th</sup> March 2001

To those innocents, who killed by Taliban.



**A Hazara Hanged publicaly in Heart Bazar**

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# Chapter 1

## Eye witness says:

1

Car spare parts dealer, living in Saidabad.  
Family living in Iran came to Pakistan through kunduz and kabul.

### **Narrates:**

"On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August I was in the center of Mazar. We heard the sound of shooting coming from the west which became louder. At 11:00 a.m. the shooting started in the city center and people started trying to escape towards their homes. I was near Darwaz-Balkh when shooting started so I hid in one of the serais (a small hotel). the Taliban started searching the houses, serais. They searched the serai I was in. I donot looked like a Hazara which is how I survived. The rest of 25 people were interrogated seriously- all were civilians, mostly cart Pullers and street traders. They killed nine of them, who were Hazaras in Darwaze Balkh. One of them lied down before being hit but they then shot him. They were then all put in a wall. (Note: the walls are made of mud. kah-gil. So they put a mud wall and layer by layer put the dead bodies in it completing the wall). As I watched the situation I knew they will come and check again so I left. I saw many dead bodies of shopkeepers and civilians lying on the streets in the center of Mazar. During the first day they indiscriminately killed any one they saw, from Tajik Uzbek and Hazara ethnic groups but after that they started killing specifically Hazaras.

One women from this family was bringing news about the situation in Saidabad and Dasht-e-shor. When the Taliban entered houses in Saidabad and Dasht-e-shor, they shot the Hazaras even if they saw women children or old men. They were looking for the Hazaras and if they found them they killed them. There were more than 100 bodies between Saidabad junction and the prison, and many on the side streets. In Karte Ariana men were told to go to mosque and pray. After the prayers were finished all 150 people in the mosque were put in containers and taken to an unknown place. Many people were Arrested. On the second day (9<sup>th</sup> August) they killed 200 people next to Mazari's Shrine. In Sultan Razaia high school 300 people were killed (note: this is

where all the Iranian diplomats were killed and buried too). We heard that 700 people who were arrested were then killed in Dasht-e-Hairatan."

2 - MAZAR, HAZARA, DARWAZ-I SHADIAN

Street trader in Mandai survived as he has a Pashtoon landlord in whose compound he was living and who facilitated his escape. He left Mazar, ten days after its fall, through Kunduz and Chitral.

**Narrates:**

The first day when the Taliban entered the city killed every one whom they saw on the streets. I was in Mandai market selling things. I heard Kalashnikov fire from Darwaz-I Balkh and saw people escaping from the city. I escaped through Muhabarat street (east of the SAKHI shrine). My cousin was with me. He was hit in the leg and I was unable to carry him. After the Taliban came into that area they killed them. with difficulty I reached in my house in Darwaz-e-Sahdian. About 1.00 p.m. I heard a Datsun (Pickup) passing my street and the sound of continuous firing for ten minutes. After that the firing stopped and I heard the sound of people crying and the voices of Taliban. They were asking people where the houses of Hazaras were and saying that you should tell us where the Hazaras were. They came to our house and our landlords spoke to them. They asked if there were any Hazaras here and he said no.

In our street a women was living with her husband and son. The husband was not at home and the Taliban killed her son in front of her. After killing him she was crying and saying that "I am not Hazara, I am Uzbek" the Taliban then said "why didn't you say before." The Taliban were not able to speak Persian well- they were speaking khandahari Pashtu and Urdu (the national language of Pakistan).

One of neighbours named Khodabaksh was a vegetable seller in Mandai. They beat him on his head with a stick (like a police baton) and killed him in this way. I saw a man trying to escape from our street. He was Hazara killed by Taliban with a bayonet (BARCHA) in his head, face and eyes. In our street a sweet maker called Mohib Ali lived . The taliban entered his house where they killed him with 12 members of his family including children women and old man.

During 10 days they killed 20 people from our neighbourhood. After that my landlord helped me and I was able to leave with half my family to Hairatan, then to Kunduz, Badakhshan and to Chitral. On the way from the Rouza Sakhi (Rouze Hazrat Ali . asalaam) to Tasadi bridge (at the entrance to kamaz camp) I saw blood and oil (KHON WA CHARBI JISAD) on the streets but the bodies had been taken away, but I could see bodies still on the back streets which were stinking. Half of my family are still in Mazar and I don't know what happened to them."

### **3PUL-I-KHUMRI,HAZARA**

Background: Farmers, small land owners

Son is a migrant in Quetta, Pakistan. Mother 65 years old who was living in the family home near Pul-I-Khumri when it was taken by local pro-taliban pashtuns. There was apparently no fighting in her village which was evacuated by Hizb-I Wahdat before taliban- local or extra locals (Taliban of the village and other Taliban from other part of Afghanistan like Talib from Balkh, Qunduz, Kandahar even Pakistan) arrived. During the interview she was distraught, crying and at times was unable to talk.

#### **25YearOld-narrates:**

"We were living in Gawsaran in Baghlan Province which was controlled by Hizb-e-Wahdat. After the Taliban came to this area they killed my wife and son Rauf and Mohammad Asif and started looting. Only my mother aged 65 survived but has lost her mind. She came to Pul-I-Khumri and then to Quetta (Pakistan).

#### **Mother**

**narrates:**

Two of my grand son were killed by the Taliban. They (the taliban) were from Kutub kheil and Khoghaini tribes who lived in our neighboring village. They looted our houses and divided our land (75 jeribs - 10x 10 meter of land makes one Jrib) among themselves and now some of them are living in our house. We were happy with Hussain kheil and Zamon kheil (other pashtun tribes) who were also our neighbors and who didn't do anything against us then. When the taliban entered our house they killed my two grandsons who were 12 and 10 years old. They hit them on their heads with rifle butts. When they became unconscious they shot them. My daughter in law put her self at their feet to ask not to fire but they also beat her on her head with their kalashnikov rifle butts until she died. For one hour they looted our house of valuable things and told me to leave the village. They did not allow me to bury my daughter in law and grand son. I did not know what would happen to me and I thought they would kill me after a few minutes. I do not know who took me to Pul-I-Khumri and then to Jebal Seraj. There was a hazara family with six women and an old man who helped me come to Quetta where my son was".

**4** - MAZAR, TAJIK, KARTE NUR-I-KHUDA  
Narrator: Educated from Shomali  
Occupation: streets money changer in Kefayat market. Came to Quetta through Maimana, Heart, and Khandahar.

#### **Narrates:**

I was living in tappe Karte Nur-I-Khuda (a place in the Mazar) at 11 a.m. on Saturday. I heard shooting in the city which increased after a few minutes. I came out of my house to find out what was happening. I saw people running away and some one said that the taliban had entered the city through Kodi barq (name of place in Mazar) and the Hizb-e Islami (Hizb Islami, because Hizb Islami people were also there in the shape of Taliban) in the city were firing at people.

At this time I saw taliban vehicles coming from Sharak and Dashti- Shore which were entering Karte

## **SEPTEMBER 1998**

### **1. Mahboba a 25 year old girl and a student of university in Balkh who lived in Sayed abad, Mazar-I-Sharif has come from Mazar in September 9<sup>th</sup> in Peshawar says:**

It was a normal day that day. Every body was busy in his/her business. I like other went to university to attend my classes. That we had a test and the student were busy in taking the test. Suddenly I heard the sound of some rocket blasting. All escaped from the university .after that sound of rocket blasts, we heard firing of the lights weapons such as Kalashinkoves etc.

No one knew what happened at that moment. some thought that might be there is again fighting between shir arab a commander from Junbish-I- Mili Islami of Rashid Dustom and Shura Nazzar of commander Masood. But it was not a face to face fighting as it used to be happened before. There was firing from one side - the Rouza-e-Mubarak. in the area close to interior ministry, a number of arm fighters and civilians were killed. Then all were escaping from the main roads to the small streets to save their lives. Still people were asking each other what is happening.

Once some pick ups entered the city with white flags on them. Still people were confused if Taliban had come to the city. The firing continued from 10 to 12 am in 8<sup>th</sup> august 1998.

Witnesses from Rouza Mobarak said while Taliban entered the city they set Pickas at both sides of streets and started to fire directly on people. These people lost their lives while they were escaping the incidents.

The most targeted areas were Zera'at, sayed Abad, ali Chopan, and Alam Arab. How ever the other areas f the city were also targeted.

Civilians death bodies ordered to be left in the spot for three day as Taliban revenge when last years Taliban death bodies were remained unburied in the streets for many days. During these three days dogs in the streets ate the death bodies. The Taliban, after three days, ordered the relative of the victims to go in the streets, search, find, and bury death bodies.

Among these people I know a boy whose name was Ehsanullah and was a 12 year old boy. he was the only breadwinner of the family. his mother used to bake the bread and he was selling them in the streets.

Karat Shafa Khana, Ziarat, and and Hazara inhabitants areas had the largest victims number. Other areas, however were searched and then the men were detained. They took the prisoners to Mazar central prison, Qala-e-Zaini, Balkh , and Shiberghan. Some have been taken to Khandahar.

Before the fall of Mazar to the Taliban, about **3000** fresh fighter troops were sent by Hizb-I-Wahdat from Bamyan to defend Taliban offensive into Mazar. They did not do that, as the northern alliance forces were dis-organised. There for they did not succeed to use the newly arrived potential from Bamyan.

All who manage to survive are hidden in their houses. Now it was one o'clock and there was a death like silence in the city. Shortly after a while a home to home search began. My sister Shafiqah and I saw that the Taliban were searching houses and they took men of Hazaras, Tajiks, Uzbeks to the central prison of Mazar. These searching were continued for three days and young men were detained.



One of neighbouring families whom had no relation with any political parties lost the two men and some in laws with whom they lived together in a house. It was just of being Hazaras. The in laws Hussain Ali and Yusuf were known later to be taken to Shiberghan and the fate of the two young boys Nabi and Mohammed remained unknown. The neighbouring Pashtoon boys, witnessing of the event, told their mother that your boys have been killed, we saw ourselves. Then the poor mother disappointedly, went to search for the death bodies of her dear sons. She was looking the streets and streams. When she was searching for her two sons death bodies she witnessed a woman who found her sons death body that was torn into pieces by dogs. She was collecting parts of the body in to a bag. Nabi's mother wished if she could do so.

People remained locked in their homes. No one could manage to arrange dinner or lunch. Taliban did not accept food from prisoners family members nor they provide them with. But the third and fourth day they sort out prisoners by the ethnic identity such as Pashtoons, Tajiks, Uzbaks, Turkmans, and Hazaras. Other gradually were released but Hazaras were not.

One of my relatives who later on was released said: "Taliban placed the prisoners mostly Hazaras in three containers to take them to Shiberghan or Khandahar. They died inside the containers as result of hot weather and no holes to reach fresh air inside".

There is a very hot weather in Laili desert in which normal trips are difficult to cross from. When these containers were crossing the desert all were died except two men. Their death bodies were thrown in the desert.

In "Karta Shafa Khana" Taliban thrown themselves from the walls of the houses to kill the innocent people. They killed 4-5 prisons in each of the houses.

After a week I could go to one of my friends house who was a Tajik family member. They Narrates:

In our street more than 50 people were killed. A Hazara boy was came down from the wall of the house that has been being chased with a Talib. his name was Nasrat. He looked to be 19 year old. We could manage to hide him. When the Talib came and asked us where the Hazara boy is, we started to speak in Pashtoo, suddenly changed his manner and said we have come here to defend you Pashtoons we do not harm you. do not afraid. he went back..."

There were searching for boys of 14 or above 14 years old to arrest them if they were Hazaras. if they could speak Pashtoo it was enough to excuse and release them.

### **1. Shabeer Ahmed s/o bahadur khan a 2 year old boy is a student of literature faculty of Balkh University. he is living in darwaza Shadiyan. He narrates:**

Taliban entered Mazar city shortly after two hours resistance by the opposition groups. it 11o'clock of 8<sup>th</sup> august. At the moment I was at south part of the Rouza-e-Sharif when Taliban entered the city. They came in to the city from two directions, from Balkh district and Dahdadi district.

In the first two hours Taliban killed everybody in the streets. Afterwords, they started to detain people from every where. Most of the detainees, later or, were killed collectively.

Taliban treats people with violence. About **12000** people were arrested and taken to the Mazar central prison, two prisons in the Marmol street and one in the Ustad Ata a commander of Shura-e-Nezar, headquarter in the west side of Rouza. More than five thousands people have been killed. the victims are mostly Hazara.

Taliban targeted areas of Sayed abad, Dasht-I-Shor, Ali Chopan, and Mazari's Grave the most. People belonging to other ethnic group save Hazaras live especially pashtoons.

Among the victims there were a number of children.

While Hazaras were hiding their family's members death bodies were remained unburied in the streets for two to three days. Dog ate most of the death bodies.

Mullah Abdul Manan Niazi governor of Mazar in his speeches, ask Hazaras, either change their religious from Shia to Sunnior to leave Afghanistan for Graveyard (IRAN).

After many days people could come in and go out of the city, if still they were not Hazaras.

Prison were full of prisoners. The detainees were pressed in the rooms and yards. There were no food and water. Fire fighter trucks were set up to pump water from out side the prisons, as there was no space inside. poor prisoners could not drink enough water to cut down their thirst instead they kept their handkerchifs under the shower of the tucks pump water to become juicy and then to press the water in to their mouth with their eyes to sky.

**2. Moahammed Kabir a 17 year old boy student of grad 10 of one of the schools in Mazar-I-Sharif ,Afghanistan lived in areas around raouza-e-sharif. He has recently come from Mazar-I-Sharif and says:**

Before the Taliban captured Mazar, it was under the control of northern alliance forces. Taliban captured Mazar in August 8<sup>th</sup>.it was 10:25 am. They fired on people in the street when they first entered the city. All who could not manage to escape. The firing continued for two hours. Afterwards, the Taliban started to enter people's houses and killed male members of the families. they did not rape. they killed and arrest people in the first day. for the next days they killed only Hazaras. They killed people with torture.

It was the third day of Taliban control in the city that they enter our house. They hit me. They fired on me, but God blessed, it did not touch me. They repeatedly asked us to give guns and weapons you have hidden, although I told them we do not have any. They looted our property. They took our car, cash, tape recorder...they stayed in our house for three hours, searching all things. They did not find anything, but they asked me to go with them. My uncles wife and other females started t cry loudly and request them to leave the boy. The Commonder an 18 or19 year old young boy was very bloodthirsty one. He was always saying that: I am killing you. You Hazaras killed 10000 Talibs last year. that day they let me stay home. when they went I escaped and stayed in an other place for twenty days. The Taliban killed about 20000 innocent civilians and 5000 military gunman. The streets were full of dead bodies. Mothers were searching for their son and husband's death bodies in the streets and streams.

Taliabn detained most of my friends. Some of them, who released, said that Taliban took the prisoners to kandahar in the containers. First they kept the prisoners in Mazar prison, then to Shiberghan, then to Maimana, as there were no enough room for such a large number of prisonrers.taliban, mostly, targeted Sayeabad, Karta Shafa Khana, Ali Chopan, Zera'at, almmurad, and Mazari's Grave.

They killed people even by firing from Halicopter from the air. I know my neighbours who have been killed by Taliban. They also killed Iranian diplomats in the Iranian consulate in Madan Namak, Mazar-I-Sharif. The Taliban authorities in Mazar directly threat Hazara ethnic groups as mullah Abdul Manan Naizithe governor of the Mazar city in his speeches was encouraging so.

**3. Mr. Namatullah s/o mohammed yunus a22 year old boy from Sayed Abad of Mazar sharif has recently came and says:**

I left Mazar in 26 August, 1998. I lost my two young brothers. One was 12 and other was 19 years old. They were killed just for their ethnic identity. It was midnight, 12:30 am, when they knocked the door. Two pick-ups with 12 Taliban fighters asked my younger brother-- Hashmatullah, where are you from and to which ethnic group you belong? My brother said the truth, "we are from Kabul and we are Hazaras." Then they entered our house and started to search. They took my brothers outside the house. Firing sound was heard. When my mother looked outside they had been already killed. My appearance is not like Hazaras, although I am. that was why I could manage to go to Kunduz from the house of my pashtoon friend, then to Pakistan. my family is still in Mazar but they change the house after my brothers were killed.

Everyday 75 to 90 Hazaras were slaughtered on Mazari's grave. At nights Taliban were entering in Hazaras houses and killing men, or taking them to Laili desert for mass killing.

**4. Mr. mohammed naseer a student of his last semester of medical faculty of Balkh university of Mazar-I-Sharif left mazar to Peshawar in 10 September 1998. He narrates:**

Taliban treat people according to their ethnic identity. they treat with violence with hazaras while with others they were a little bit smooth. I twice arrested by taliban. in the first I was released with the help of my director who was a private hospital director in which I was employed. In the second time they released me when I show the ID card of the hospital.

Taliban arrested my two cousins Mr Nabi and Mr Iqbal. Their families had contact with them till ten days. Afterwards, they went unknown. Mr Nabi was disabled from his two legs. The prison had very bad and sever conditions. The prisoners received no food or drinking water. The central prison of Mazar was emptied many times. People say most of them were killed in Laili Desert. Some who have seen the desert say " there are hills of death bodies in the desert."

The Taliban ordered all people in Mazar to practice Sunni style Islam in their daily life. People should attend the five time prayers in the nearest mosques. Taliban washed all carpets cushions, mattersses and etc of the SHIA Muslim mosques in order to make them clean an Islamic way. They also washed the wall of these Mosques. then the prayers perform in a Sunni style Islam.

(Source: CCA Peshawar)

## **SUNDAY TIMES REPORT**

**TALIBAN MILITIA MASSACRED  
8,000 PEOPLE IN MAZAR  
(by our staff Corespondent)**

**LONDON, NOV 1:** the times on Sunday published a detailed eyewitness accounts of, what it claimed, massacre of 8,000 people by the Talibans in Afghanistan when they captured the northern Afghan city of Mazar-I-Sharif in August last.

Quoting the testimony, compiled by international observers and handed to western diplomats in Pakistan, the news paper said that hundreds of people were packed in containers where they were suffocated when the doors were locked in searing midday heat.

"men, women and children were shot in their homes, on the streets, and the hospital patients were murdered in their beds".

"statements made available to the Sunday times describe a campaign of slaughter direct against Shia Muslim minority the Hazara," it said.

The news paper said that the claims of witnesses have been supported by the influential American groups Human Rights Watch, which is due to reveal its own findings on the massacre on Sunday and will call on the United Nations to investigate what it describes as "one of the single worst examples of killings of civilians in Afghanistan's 20- year war.

"the detailed evidence of the Taliban atrocities will embarrass western policy makers who still see the fundamentalism as useful players in a modern great game to keep Iranian and Russian influence out of Afghanistan and to ensure that the huge oil and gas reaches of central Asia remain a prize for western multinationals, the news paper said.

Quoting unnamed witness, the news paper said that the Taliban fighters swept through the city of Mazar-I-Sharif firing heavy machine guns mounted on pick up trucks. One unnamed described how the streets were covered with bodies and blood. He also claimed that the Taliban forbade anyone to bury these corpses for six days.

The paper had quoted "numerous unnamed witness", saying that on the second day of the capture, the Taliban began house to house search for Hazara men, who are easy to be Recognised by their Mangols features.

Another unnamed witness, who gave testimony, said that the victims were shot in the head, the chest and the testicles." Other had been slaughtered in what he (witness) called '**the Halal way**' By having their throats slit," the paper said.

The paper quoted another unnamed witness as claiming that men not murdered on the spot were herded into containers after being badly beaten. "he (the unnamed witness) saw the doors opened on a container after all the inside had died from suffocation".

The witness also testified that some containers were filled with children who were taken to an unknown destination after their parents had been killed.

"Human Rights Watch has obtained gruesome confirmation of the Taliban's penchant for death by container.

It quotes a men who was detained by the militia and saw containers trucks filled with victims leaving the Mazar-I-Sharif jail several times every day".

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## **THE MASSACRE IN MAZAR-I SHARIF**

**Human Rights Watch Report**

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### **I. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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This report documents a massacre of civilians and other serious breaches of international humanitarian law committed in Afghanistan in August 1998. The incident, which occurred in Mazar-i Sharif, a city in northern Afghanistan, represents one of the single worst examples of

killings of civilians in Afghanistan's twenty-year war. No foreigners or press were allowed in the city or its environs at the time, and only a few humanitarian organizations have been permitted to carry out relief work in the city since the incident. Human Rights Watch is the first international human rights organization to interview survivors who have reached Pakistan in the weeks following the massacre. In the report, we urge the United Nations to undertake an urgent investigation into the massacre and the full range of abuses that took place in Mazar-i Sharif, including 1997 killings of Taliban soldiers in the city that motivated those involved in the subsequent offensive to seek revenge. Human Rights Watch believes that determining the truth about what happened represents the first step toward accountability and may provide a means toward breaking the cycle of revenge killings that continue to characterize the civil war in Afghanistan.

## Summary

On August 8, 1998, Taliban militia forces captured the city of Mazar-i Sharif in northwest Afghanistan, the only major city controlled by the United Front, the coalition of forces opposed to the Taliban. The fall of Mazar was part of a successful offensive that gave the Taliban control of almost every major city and important significant territory in northern and central Afghanistan. Within the first few hours of seizing control of the city, Taliban troops killed scores of civilians in indiscriminate attacks, shooting noncombatants and suspected combatants alike in residential areas, city street and markets. Witnesses described it as a "killing frenzy" as the advancing forces shot at "anything that moved." Retreating opposition forces may also have engaged in indiscriminate shooting as they fled the city. Human Rights Watch believes that at least hundreds of civilians were among those killed as the panicked population of Mazar-i Sharif tried to evade the gunfire or escape the city.

In the days that followed, Taliban forces carried out a systematic search for male members of the ethnic Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek communities in the city. The Hazaras, a Persian-speaking Shi'a ethnic group, were particularly targeted, in part because of their religious identity. During the house-to-house searches, scores and perhaps hundreds of Hazara men and boys were summarily executed, apparently to ensure that they would be unable to mount any resistance to the Taliban. Also killed were eight Iranian officials at the Iranian consulate in the city and an Iranian journalist. Thousands of men from various ethnic communities were detained first in the overcrowded city jail and then transported to other cities, including Shiberghan, Herat and Qandahar. Most of the prisoners were transported in large container trucks capable of holding one hundred to 150 people. In two known instances, when the trucks reached Shiberghan, some 130 kilometers west of Mazar, nearly all of the men inside had asphyxiated or died of heat stroke inside the closed metal containers. Some prisoners were also transported in smaller trucks. As of late October, some 4,500 men from Mazar remained in detention.

The few international relief groups operating in Mazar had evacuated their staff in the days before the attack on the city.<sup>1</sup> On August 16, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), resumed its operations in the city. In late October, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) was permitted to resume its activities. Following the takeover, the Taliban allowed no journalists to travel anywhere in the area.

In the absence of a full-scale investigation, there is no way to know precisely how many were killed in the weeks following the fall of Mazar to the Taliban. Based on interviews with

survivors and other informed sources, Human Rights Watch believes that at least 2,000 may have been killed in the city and possibly many more. Many civilians were also killed in aerial bombardments and rocket attacks as they fled south of the city toward the Alborz mountains. Human Rights Watch is also concerned by persistent reports that women and girls, particularly in certain Hazara neighborhoods of Mazar-i Sharif, were raped and abducted during the Taliban takeover of the city.

The killings of Hazara men and boys appear to have been carried out largely in reprisal for the killing of several thousand Taliban soldiers after a failed attempt by the Taliban to take the city from May to July 1997. Of these, some 2,000 were reportedly summarily executed after capture in Shiberghan and other areas, including areas to which prisoners from Mazar were deported. A number of neighborhoods targeted for searches in Mazar had been among those where resistance by Hizb-i Wahdat troops against the Taliban had begun at that time. Witnesses stated that Taliban conducting the house-to-house searches accused Hazaras in general of killing Taliban troops in 1997 and did not distinguish between combatants and noncombatants. In speeches given at mosques throughout Mazar, the Taliban governor, Mulla Manon Niazi, also blamed Hazaras for the 1997 killings.

The Hazaras were also singled out because they are Shi'a. The Taliban are Sunni Muslims and followers of a strict conservative sect that considers the Shi'a to be infidels. During their search operations in Mazar, the Taliban ordered some residents to prove that they were not Shi'a by reciting Sunni prayers. Over a period of several weeks, Governor Niazi made inflammatory speeches against Hazaras in which he ordered them to become Sunnis, leave Afghanistan, or risk being killed.

The Taliban forces that captured Mazar-i Sharif included Pashtuns from Balkh, the province of which Mazar is the capital and the name of a town northwest of Mazar. These Balkh Pashtuns had been members of a militia aligned with the Hizb-i Islami, a largely Pashtun faction that was part of the United Front. Some weeks before the offensive on Mazar, Hizb-i Wahdat forces launched an operation in Balkh to drive Pashtuns from the area so that they would not be able to provide support to the advancing Taliban troops. The Hizb-i Wahdat forces reportedly engaged in widespread rape and looting. The rapes in particular reportedly drove several key commanders among the Balkh Pashtuns to switch sides and help the Taliban. Some were reportedly also unhappy with Hizb-i Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's courting of Shi'a religious leaders. Other commanders were simply bought off. Balkh Pashtuns were among the first troops entering the city and have been identified among the Taliban troops who engaged in indiscriminate shooting on the first day. Balkh Pashtuns also took part in the house-to-house searches and may have acted as informers identifying Hazara neighborhoods and houses. However, witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch stated that the search parties also included Taliban officers who were not from local areas and that the Taliban officers separating prisoners at the jail were not Balkh Pashtuns but non-local "mainstream" Taliban — those from Qandahar or other predominantly Pashtun areas of southern Afghanistan where many of the senior Taliban leaders are based. The speeches by Governor Niazi also demonstrate an intent at senior levels to target Hazaras. Other witnesses stated that senior Taliban leaders were not only aware of the extent of the killing in Mazar but had decided to allow it to continue for several days before stopping it.

Human Rights Watch also interviewed a number of witnesses who described the abductions of girls and women from neighborhoods in Mazar, including Saidabad, Karte Ariana and Ali

Chopan. There are consistent reports as well of a number of incidents of rape; Balkh Pashtuns were identified in some cases. In the weeks after the takeover the Taliban announced the execution of some soldiers who had been responsible for crimes, including rape, during the offensive.

## **Methodology**

Human Rights Watch conducted the interviews for this report in Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta, Pakistan. The eyewitnesses we spoke to included residents of Mazar-i Sharif who were Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara. The witnesses had lived in different neighborhoods of the city. Some had stayed in the city for several weeks after the Taliban takeover; others had left within a few days. Most had arrived in Pakistan after several weeks of travel inside Afghanistan.

Their testimonies about the events in Mazar-i Sharif from August 8 through early September are consistent in the depiction of the patterns of attack by the advancing Taliban troops, the systematic nature of the search operations, the sorting of prisoners at the jail, and the transport of prisoners. All of those who remained in the city after the first day separately witnessed summary executions of men and boys as they were being taken from their homes or while being transported to the jail. All of them also heard one or more of Governor Niazi's speeches that, while they varied somewhat in content, reflected consistent themes of anti-Shi'ism and revenge for the 1997 killings.

Human Rights Watch also interviewed sources in nongovernmental organizations and in the diplomatic community who have monitored and documented the events in Mazar. Information provided by these sources is consistent with the patterns described by eyewitnesses.

## **Recommendations**

Human Rights Watch urges U.N. human rights monitoring mechanisms, in particular the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, to undertake an investigation into the full range of abuses that took place in Mazar-i Sharif and its environs in August 1998, including indiscriminate shootings and extrajudicial executions of civilians, mass detentions, and abductions and rapes of women. Given that the killings appear to have been carried out in retaliation for the killings of Taliban soldiers, including the summary execution of prisoners, in May 1997, the investigation should also include an exhumation of those mass graves and those of civilians apparently killed in reprisal attacks in Maimaneh and Qizalabad.<sup>2</sup>

The Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights should conduct a thorough investigation of these sites as soon as possible, as recommended by its May 1998 exploratory mission, and should give the issue the highest priority. The team should include forensic experts and sufficient support staff to carry out exhumations of the grave sites and analysis of the remains; staff with field experience in monitoring human rights abuses and interviewing victims and witnesses of atrocities, including torture, rape, and sexual abuse; and legal experts knowledgeable in international human rights and humanitarian law. The team's reports to the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Security Council on its findings and recommendations should be made publicly available.

It is likely that an investigation team may face significant obstacles in carrying out its mandate. It is thus critically important that the international community do everything possible to urge the Taliban to permit such an investigation to go forward. The U.N. secretary-general should use his good offices to facilitate the mission, and all U.N. departments and agencies should lend their logistic support to the mission. The international community should also insist on the following benchmarks for conducting the investigations:

- Guaranteed security for all members of the team conducting the investigations;
- Unrestricted access to the territory and full investigatory rights; the right to travel freely and visit any site, including any suspected or known places of detention; and the right to interview persons freely and in private, using interpreters of their choosing;
- Disclosure of all current places of detention where persons detained in connection with the conflict are being held; disclosure of the names of all individuals detained during the course of the conflict; and their current whereabouts.

1 In fact, few international groups had had any expatriate staff in Mazar since September 1997 because of the precarious security conditions. Fighting between various factions was commonplace, as were incidents of banditry and extortion. The offices of the U.N. were looted in May and September 1997.

2 The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, together with a forensic physician, visited the mass grave sites in December 1997 and recommended in his report to the General Assembly that a thorough investigation of the killings take place. In May 1998, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) sent an exploratory mission to the sites. That team also looked into massacres of civilians by the Taliban in the region of Mazar-i Sharif which took place in July and September 1997 and around Meimaneh in January 1998. On the basis of the team's report, the UNHCHR had begun to make plans for the investigation when the July offensive put those plans on hold.

## BACKGROUND

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By mid-1998, the war in Afghanistan was well into its twentieth year. Following the withdrawal of the last Soviet troops in 1988, the fall of the government of Dr. Najibullah in 1992 by resistance forces marked the beginning of a bloody civil war among shifting alignments of the resistance forces.<sup>3</sup> The Taliban, a movement of religious students (*talibs*) from the Pashtun areas of eastern and southern Afghanistan who had been educated in traditional Islamic schools in Pakistan, emerged in 1994 in part as a reaction to the failure of the other Afghan factions to end the fighting and establish a government that could ensure some peace and stability in the country. When the Taliban took control of the city of Qandahar in 1994, they forced the surrender of dozens of local Pashtun leaders who had presided over a situation of complete lawlessness. It



was in this context that the Taliban acquired a reputation for sweeping into power with little bloodshed and with the support of the local population. However, these characteristics of the Taliban's military strategy did not hold true in its battles for Herat, Kabul, or the north.<sup>4</sup>

The Taliban's early victories were followed by a series of defeats, as their efforts to take the western city of Herat and the capital Kabul in early 1995 resulted in heavy losses. It was at this point that Pakistan reportedly began providing extensive assistance to the Taliban.<sup>5</sup> Such support was crucial in the Taliban's successful offensives on Herat in August 1995 and in a lightning offensive in September 1996 that gave the Taliban control of Kabul.

As the Taliban consolidated its hold over Kabul and the rest of the country, the alliance of opposition parties in the north remained riven by feuds among the various factions: the Tajik-dominated Jamiat-i Islami of Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Massoud; the Uzbek-dominated Junbish of Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum; the Hazara Hizb-i Wahdat with its stronghold in the central mountainous region of the country known as Hazarajat; and the predominantly Pashtun Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The history of bloodshed among all of these parties dates from before t>

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rnment in 1992. Battles for control of Kabul among these factions in 1993-1995 destroyed at least one-third of the city, killed thousands of civilians, and drove a half million refugees to Pakistan.<sup>6</sup> As party leaders frequently had only nominal control over their commanders, much of the north remained a patchwork of fiefdoms under the authority of various warlords. For civilians there was little security from murder, rape and extortion.

In May 1997 the Taliban launched another offensive on Mazar-i Sharif. This time, they received support from Dostum's second-in-command, Gen. Malik Pahlawan, who apparently believed he had struck a deal to share power with the Taliban and ousted Dostum in a coup.<sup>7</sup> When the Taliban reneged on the agreement and began disarming local forces, resistance broke out first in Hazara neighborhoods, and the Taliban found themselves trapped in a city that had turned murderous on them. Hundreds of Taliban were attacked in the streets and killed, and at least 2,000 taken prisoner, only to be summarily executed and their bodies dumped in wells or taken to remote desert sites and left lying in the open. Most analysts appear to agree that General Malik was responsible for many of the summary executions of the Taliban prisoners. However, a large number of Taliban forces were reportedly gunned down in the streets by the Hazara Hizb-i Wahdat. Malik fled to Iran, and Dostum returned. Driven back after a subsequent attack on Mazar in September 1997, retreating Taliban troops who may have included Balkh Pashtuns massacred Hazara civilians in Qizalabad, south of the city on the road to Herat.

Pakistan reportedly was again instrumental in providing support for the Taliban offensive that began in July 1998. As the Taliban neared Mazar this time, a number of opposition commanders left the city, and Jamiat fighters reportedly looted their own office. Once again, the Taliban relied on defectors to clear a way into the city for them, but this time they demanded guarantees that they would not be double-crossed. Pashtun militia commanders from Balkh who had become disillusioned with Hekmatyar agreed to join forces with the Taliban and move in behind the main Hizb-i Wahdat force encamped at Qala Zaini, a walled area west of the city. Trapped, virtually the entire Hizb-i Wahdat force, estimated at between 1,500 and 3,000, was killed there or on the roads leading north and east of the city. A smaller contingent of some 700 Hizb-i Wahdat troops

fled south from the city to the mountains, and the way was clear for the main Taliban force to enter Mazar.

**3 EVEN BEFORE THE FALL OF THE NAJIBULLAH GOVERNMENT, VARIOUS AFGHAN FACTIONS FOUGHT EACH OTHER. SEE HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, *AFGHANISTAN: THE FORGOTTEN WAR, HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND VIOLATIONS OF THE LAWS OF WAR SINCE THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL* (NEW YORK, 1991); BARNETT RUBIN, *THE FRAGMENTATION OF AFGHANISTAN: STATE FORMATION AND COLLAPSE IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM* (NEW HAVEN: YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1995).**

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**4 FOR A DETAILED DISCUSSION OF PAKISTAN'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE TALIBAN, SEE ANTHONY DAVIS, "HOW THE TALIBAN BECAME A MILITARY FORCE," IN WILLIAM MALEY, ED., *FUNDAMENTALISM REBORN? AFGHANISTAN AND THE TALIBAN* (LAHORE: VANGUARD BOOKS, 1998).**

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**5 IBID.**

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**6 HIZB-I ISLAMI AND JAMIAT-ISLAMI FOUGHT BITTER BATTLES FOR YEARS BEFORE THE FALL OF THE NAJIBULLAH GOVERNMENT. THESE CONTINUED AFTER RABBANI WAS INSTALLED AS PRESIDENT IN 1992. ALTHOUGH GULBUDDIN HEKMATYAR WAS NAMED PRIME MINISTER HE REFUSED TO ENTER KABUL AND INSTEAD POUNDED THE CITY WITH ROCKETS. HIZB-E WAHDAT, JAMIAT-I ISLAMI, AND ANOTHER FACTION, THE ITTEHAD-I ISLAMI OF ABDUL-RAB AL-RASUL SAYYAF, FOUGHT ARTILLERY BATTLES IN KABUL. DOSTUM, A FORMER MILITIA COMMANDER WHO HAD SUPPORTED NAJIBULLAH, SWITCHED SIDES IN 1992, HELPING TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE RESISTANCE FORCES TO TAKE KABUL IN APRIL OF THAT YEAR. IN JANUARY 1994 HE JOINED FORCES WITH HEKMATYAR TO TRY TO OUST RABBANI. IN FEBRUARY OF THAT YEAR, MASSOUD CRUSHED AN ATTEMPT BY THE HIZB-I WAHDAT TO TAKE KABUL. BY 1996, HEKMATYAR HAD LOST MUCH SUPPORT AND CREDIBILITY, AND A NUMBER OF HIS HIZB-I ISLAMI COMMANDERS HAD DEFECTED TO THE TALIBAN.**

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**7 MALIK WAS AVENGING THE KILLING OF HIS BROTHER RASOOL, WHO WAS GUNNED DOWN IN MAZAR ALONG WITH FIFTEEN BODYGUARDS ON JUNE 25, 1996. MALIK BLAMED THE ASSASSINATION ON DOSTUM. SEE ANTHONY DAVIS, "TALIBAN FOUND LACKING WHEN NATION-BUILDING BECKONED," *JANE'S INTELLIGENCE REVIEW*, VOL. 9, ISSUE 8, AUGUST 1, 1997, PP. 359-364.**

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### **III. THE FIRST DAY OF THE TAKEOVER**

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Taliban troops entered the western outskirts of Mazar-i Sharif at about 9:30 a.m. on August 8. Residents reported hearing firing from the west from the early morning; many stated that they assumed that fighting had broken out between various factions within the United Front and that they did not realize that the Taliban had reached the city until they saw their characteristic black

turbans and white flags. The firing continued until about 1:00 p.m. One witness described it as a "killing frenzy." Although several witnesses reported seeing bodies of Hizb-i Wahdat fighters in some locations, from the descriptions provided by survivors it is clear that many of those killed were noncombatants. One witness who passed through a market area on her way home saw that among those killed were a boy who had been selling bread from a cart, a woman who she was told had been on her way to a social gathering, and a man who had been grinding wheat. Many merchants in the bazaar were reportedly killed as the Taliban moved through the streets shooting at random. In some cases the Taliban used machine guns mounted on jeeps to fire continuously into the streets. A witness who watched from the roof of a shop described the scene of panic in the city:

From the roof I could see smoke coming from the west. I came out of my shop and went to the customs area from where I could see people fleeing from the west. It was chaos. People were running and being hit by cars trying to leave, market stalls were overturned. I heard oneman say, "It's hailing," because of the bullets. I went home and from the windows I could hear shouting and see white flags on the cars.<sup>8</sup>

A woman described the killing of her thirteen-year-old son:

He was working in a carpet factory and was shot on the first day near Rouza-e Mubarak [the shrine in the center of Mazar]. Some people came and told me he had been taken to the hospital. They said that before he died he said, "We came to Mazar [from Kabul] to survive and now I am going to die. Who will support the family?" I did not even see him. I did not want to leave because of him, but we had to leave.

A man who was in the bazaar when the Taliban entered the city hid in a friend's house from which he could see the Taliban come into the bazaar.

At about 4:00 p.m. I saw someone running and another man pulling a cart. A Datsun full of Taliban came down the street, and the soldier inside shot the man who was running and then went after the second man and shot him, too.

Human Rights Watch obtained testimony from a number of other residents who witnessed indiscriminate and arbitrary shooting by the Taliban. A merchant stated that he was in the bazaar when the shooting started. He was with a cousin, and when they saw people running they decided to run as well. The cousin was shot in the leg and could not walk. Unable to carry him, the merchant left him and continued on to his home. He later learned that the Taliban had killed his cousin. A moneychanger witnessed the killing of two of his neighbors as they stood in the street. He had gone upstairs in his house and was watching out the window as the Taliban cars passed. His two neighbors were standing in front of their house when two of the Taliban cars stopped and the soldiers inside shot the two men.

### **Searches and Summary Executions**

The shooting, which had been nearly continuous since 10:30 a.m., had largely ceased by midday on August 8, and except for sporadic outbreaks of gunfire, the city fell silent. Later that day and continuing for at least several days after, Taliban forces began house-to-house searches for male members of the Hazara, Tajik and Uzbek communities. On the basis of information apparently provided by local Pashtun forces or other informers, they targeted predominantly Hazara

neighborhoods and in some cases knew beforehand which houses belonged to Hazaras. They were also looking for weapons. Witnesses testified that the soldiers specifically demanded to know if there were Hazaras present in the houses and asked residents to point out Hazara houses. Residents who could speak Pashto, or who did not look Hazara, or who could prove that they were not from Mazar could sometimes convince the Taliban not to search the house. Those conducting the searches included regular Taliban forces as well as Balkh Pashtuns.

In some cases the detained male members of the families were beaten or shot on the spot. Some had their throats slit. In other cases they were taken to assembly points from which they were transported by truck or other vehicle to the city jail. While most of those killed were Hazara, Human Rights Watch interviewed a number of witnesses who saw or knew of executions of Tajik and Uzbek men as well.

A Tajik man who was detained on August 10 provided this description:

I lived in Karte Bokhti. On the third day the Taliban surrounded the streets and searched every house looking for Hazaras. They were asking, "Where are the Hazara houses?" There was only one near us. There were four young Hazara men in the house, including a friend who was visiting and a young man who was doing some work at the house. The Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras in the neighborhood were also all arrested. We were all put into trucks, but the four Hazaras' hands were tied very tight and they were taken elsewhere. There were two other Hazara boys in our truck. When we stopped near the customs area, the two Hazaras were taken off and told to go to the square behind the customs area. A Taliban soldier pushed them and then shot them both in the head. I was told later that the four others were taken to Takhaneya Mahdia and shot there. They were all workers, not fighters. They were all nineteen to twenty years old.

He was held overnight with other Tajiks and Uzbeks in a place behind the customs area. The next day he and the others were taken to the jail. After he was released, he saw another victim of a summary execution, this time a Tajik.

I saw that a young Tajik boy had been killed—the Taliban soldier was still standing there, and the father was crying, "Why have you killed my son? We are Tajiks." The Talib responded, "Why didn't you say so?" and the father said, "Did you ask that I could answer?"

One witness recounted that on August 13 or 14 the Taliban came to his house and stated that they were looking for Hazaras. The witness was himself Hazara and was hiding a Hazara family in his house at that time. A neighbor who could speak Pashto told the Taliban that there were no Hazaras there, and as soon as they heard Pashto, they left. Fearing that he might still be identified, the witness went to a predominantly Sunni neighborhood, but residents there warned him not to stay there. In his own neighborhood, a Taliban supporter who owed the witness a favor also warned him to leave, and other neighbors expressed fear that his presence there would endanger the whole neighborhood. As a result, he decided to leave for Pakistan with his family.

Another witness told Human Rights Watch that he was arrested on the evening of the first day as he was moving about the city checking on relatives. As he passed a truck filled with men who had been arrested, the Taliban called out for him to come to them. He was put into the truck and when it was filled they drove toward the jail.

I was afraid they were going to shoot me. So when we reached Sarake Dostum I threw myself out of the truck. Five or six other men threw themselves out after me. I landed on the right side of the road where there was a mosque. I ran into the mosque and began to wash as if I was preparing to pray. The other men all landed on the left side of the road and were shot there in the street. I stayed inside the mosque for more than an hour and left with the others when they finished their prayers.

He did not return to his home but stayed with friends. About a week after the Taliban had come he heard that they had said that Hazaras who were not fighters could return to their homes. Two families he knew went back and the men were arrested that day.

A seventeen-year-old boy who was trying to reach his house at about noon on the first day saw three Hazaras standing at the eastern gate of Rouza Sharif. He stated that seven or eight Taliban stepped out of a Toyota Hilux and shot the three men in the head. The boy, his mother, and his siblings left the Karte Ariana neighborhood the next day for the mountains.

Another witness who lived in the Karte Ariana neighborhood stated that the Taliban came to their house on the second day. In this case the Taliban were local Pashtuns from Chohar Bolak working under a commander named Mulla Baradar. The witness's husband and daughters were hiding in the basement.

There were about five or six of them. They broke the television and demanded weapons and communications equipment. I told them that we only had one Kalashnikov, and I gave it to them and they left. Five minutes later they came back and said, "You are Hazara. Give us your husband." I told them he was not at home. I was yelling at them, and they did not search the house. Then we all left.

A woman who lived in Kamaz camp, where persons who had fled Kabul and other cities were living, stated that a large number of Taliban came searching for men at the camp the first day. Most of the men were beaten and then taken away, but some were shot on the spot.

From one tent they took six boys. They were all seventeen, eighteen, or twenty years old. They just shot them dead in front of the tent. The bodies lay there for four days until the women could finally bury them.

A medical student testified that the Taliban also searched the hospital looking for Hazaras.

I saw two Hazara boys, one about thirteen years old and one about twenty. One had a broken arm. The Taliban wanted to take them away, but the director intervened. But they came back the next day and took them.

One witness stated that he saw bodies that had been left in the city's cemeteries.

We passed by the cemetery at Dasht-e-Shour. The cemetery is along the main road. There are also shops along the road. These shops were built with the dirt taken in the same area. So there are many holes left along the road. All these holes were filled with bodies.

As he was preparing to leave Mazar he witnessed one execution.

The morning we left, with one friend, in Darvazeye Taj-Korghan, it was around 7:00 a.m., a few shops were open. We saw one Hazara porter moving flour and rice for someone. Some Taliban were having breakfast in the Arefan hotel. They saw him and shot him immediately. The owner of the flour and rice was frightened. One Talib told him, "Take your belongings and go. This man was a Hazara." Along the way the Taliban were looking for Hazaras. Soldiers asked me if I were Hazara. My friend said, "He is not Hazara, he is Pushtun." They believed him and did not stop us.

Witnesses also reported seeing bodies in a number of areas in the city, some with their hands tied behind their backs with their turbans. A large number were reportedly taken to some of the city's cemeteries. One man told Human Rights Watch that he accompanied a neighbor who was searching for the body of her husband who had been taken away the first night. After looking at twenty bodies they stopped because she said she could not look anymore. When relatives attempted to retrieve bodies or bury the dead, they were stopped by the Taliban, who told them that the bodies had to lie on the streets "until the dogs ate them," as had happened to Taliban soldiers killed in the city in 1997. Dozens of civilians were reportedly executed at the tomb of a Hazara leader Abdul Ali Mazari, who was killed while in Taliban custody in 1995. Although some residents buried bodies in secret, most bodies remained on the street for several days until the smell and the fear of health problems persuaded Taliban officials to permit burials.

### **In the Jail**

According to witnesses who had been detained there, the central jail in Mazar-i Sharif has only one well for drinking water and two toilets. After the Taliban arrived in Mazar they reportedly released some hundreds of prisoners held in the jail and began to fill it with men arrested during their search operations. Witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch reported that the jail quickly became extremely crowded: there were so many in the jail that there was no room for anyone to lie down.

As the Taliban were detaining men throughout the city, relatives of the detainees, women and children for the most part, gathered outside the jail and outside the governor's headquarters to plead for the release of relatives. In some cases they waited all day in the heat without receiving any information. Witnesses reported that Taliban troops surrounding the jail would occasionally beat those gathered there with whips.<sup>9</sup> Children were occasionally allowed in to bring food to their relatives, but no other visitors were permitted to speak with the detainees.

A Tajik witness who was detained told Human Rights Watch:

Some of the prisoners were beaten, mostly Hazaras. They were tied up and made to lie face down and then the Taliban would beat them with cables. The Taliban were telling everyone to surrender their arms and tell them where they could find Hazaras. They said, "If you hand over a Hazara, we will let you go."

He was held for three days. Taliban officials at the jail, who were reportedly all non-local "mainstream" Taliban, separated the prisoners on the basis of ethnicity; Hazaras and other Shi'as were kept on one side, Uzbeks and Tajiks on the other. Some detainees were forced to help identify members of different ethnic groups. In some cases the authorities required the detainees

to prove that they were Sunni by reciting a Sunni prayer. Many of the Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen, and the few Pashtuns there were released after someone came and vouched for them.

As the jail filled, large numbers of prisoners were transferred to other prisons in Afghanistan, principally in Shiberghan, Herat and Qandahar. The vehicles used to transport the prisoners were large metal container trucks which were twenty to forty feet in length. Witnesses estimated that the large trucks could hold between one hundred and 150 people packed closely together. At least thirty-five truckloads of prisoners were reportedly transferred from the prison in Mazar. One witness who was detained for several days stated that on at least one occasion, Governor Niazi personally oversaw the process of selecting prisoners for transfer. Another witness reported seeing many such trucks leaving the jail.

I saw containers coming out of the jail every day, several times a day. They were these big Iranian containers, twenty or forty feet long. I saw them regularly because the house we lived in is near the jail. They filled them with people they arrested and left the city.

A Tajik man who had been detained in the prison at the time described how the prisoners were ordered into the trucks:

As the jail filled up they would bring container trucks. It is hard to say exactly who was being put in. They were going to put me in, but I yelled, "I am old and Tajik—what are you doing?" It was very hot. People were already very thirsty. They put them inside and closed the doors. It was clear they would not survive ten minutes. I saw this happen once. There were maybe 120 to 150 men inside.

In at least two instances, nearly all of the prisoners inside the trucks died of asphyxiation in the crowded conditions and desert heat by the time the trucks reached Shiberghan, a three-hour drive from Mazar. One witness saw the trucks in Shiberghan:

In Shiberghan, they brought three containers to Bandare-i Ankhoï, close to the jail. When they opened the door of one truck, only three persons were alive. About 300 were dead. The three were taken to the jail. I could see all this from [where I was sitting]. This was seven days after the takeover. The containers were about twenty feet long. ... I know that there were many dead bodies because the Taliban asked [someone I know] and three Turkmen to go with them to Dasht-e-Leili [a desert site outside Shiberghan]. The Taliban did not want to touch the bodies so the porters took the bodies out of the containers.

From the testimony obtained by Human Rights Watch, it is not clear whether the deaths of the prisoners inside the trucks were intentional. Many other trucks did transport at least the majority of their prisoners without such a result. At the same time, the use of container trucks to punish or kill prisoners reportedly has several precedents in Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> Even if the killings were not intentional, the crowded conditions and extreme heat amounted to cruel and inhumane treatment under customary international humanitarian law, even for those prisoners that survived.

## **8 THE TALIBAN FLY WHITE FLAGS FROM THEIR VEHICLES.**

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<sup>9</sup> These whips, which are either those used for controlling donkeys and horses or are refitted lengths of cable, are used by the Taliban's religious police of the Ministry for the Enforcement of

Virtue and Suppression of Vice to exact punishment of persons who commit transgressions of the strict dress code or other edicts.

10 Abdul-Rab al-Rasul Sayyaf, head of the Pashtun faction Ittihad-i Islami, reportedly killed Hazara prisoners by locking them in a metal container and then building a fire around it. Malik reportedly dumped a container of Taliban prisoners in the Amu Darya river. While the facts in each case are difficult if not impossible to confirm, such reports have widespread currency, and the events described are treated as precedents and reasons for revenge.

## **V. ABDUCTIONS OF AND ASSAULTS ON WOMEN**

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Information gathered by Human Rights Watch indicates that assaults on women also featured in the Taliban's takeover of Mazar-i Sharif. Although the Taliban in general have, in contrast to most of the opposition parties, refrained from assaulting and raping women during their military campaigns, Human Rights Watch received consistent reports that young women were abducted by the Taliban from a number of neighborhoods in Mazar-i Sharif and that their whereabouts remain unknown. While such abductions do not appear to have been widespread, certain neighborhoods appear to have been targeted. Human Rights Watch was not able to locate witnesses who were willing or able to describe specific incidents in detail, but we believe the allegations are serious enough to warrant special attention in any formal investigation into assaults on civilians during the takeover of Mazar-i Sharif.

A witness living in Kamaz camp stated that some of the Taliban took away young women from the camp at the same time that they were arresting men. She knew of four or five girls who were taken from the camp, all in their early twenties. A witness from the neighborhood of Karte Ariana told Human Rights Watch that she had seen teen-age girls in the area being pushed into the Taliban's Pijaro cars and taken to an unknown destination.

A male medical student who worked and lived in one of the city hospitals for twenty days straight after the takeover stated that he saw one rape case during that time. A Hazara woman, who was a nurse, and her sister had walked to the hospital from Ali Chopan.

The nurse was in a very bad shape, she had sharp stomach pains. I could not examine her because the hospital was full of Talibs. This was a day before they segregated the hospital and put women in the children's building. I just asked a few questions and finally she said that she was raped by the Talibs. She did not say which ones. We could not talk long with the Talibs watching. I could not do much, I just gave her analgesics.

Another witness described an encounter with a nurse who had been raped who may have been the same woman.

An acquaintance of ours came to our house seven or eight days after the takeover. She became ill in our house because she had taken over twenty pills to kill herself, I don't know what kind. We called doctors from the neighborhood who gave her something to wash out her stomach. She lived in Ali Chopan, but her family was staying elsewhere, and she had gone back to check on the house when she was picked up by the Taliban. At first she did not want to tell us anything, but then she said that when she went to their house, the Talibs abducted her and locked her up in a house with twenty to twenty-five other young girls and women. They were raped every night.



They were all Hazaras. She was the only one released. One Talib told her that now they are *halal* [sanctified], and she should go to his parents in Qandahar and wait for him to come and marry her. He gave her a pass and his own identity card and told her to go to the Taliban's headquarters and from there to Qandahar, but instead she escaped.

The difficulties inherent in documenting such attacks on women are many. The refugees from Mazar-i Sharif are scattered throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan. Rape victims are unlikely to seek medical attention unless their injuries are severe. The whereabouts of abducted women and girls remain unknown. Rape victims are often reluctant to report their assaults because of the shame and stigma that they may bear as a result. And Afghan women coping with upheaval and the loss of family members in particular may fear the added worry of being identified as rape victims. Nonetheless, Human Rights Watch received consistent and reliable reports of abuses against women. We thus underscore the need for an investigation that is prepared to examine the full range of reported violations, including sexual violence.

## **V. ABDUCTIONS OF AND ASSAULTS ON WOMEN**

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Information gathered by Human Rights Watch indicates that assaults on women also featured in the Taliban's takeover of Mazar-i Sharif. Although the Taliban in general have, in contrast to most of the opposition parties, refrained from assaulting and raping women during their military campaigns, Human Rights Watch received consistent reports that young women were abducted by the Taliban from a number of neighborhoods in Mazar-i Sharif and that their whereabouts remain unknown. While such abductions do not appear to have been widespread, certain neighborhoods appear to have been targeted. Human Rights Watch was not able to locate witnesses who were willing or able to describe specific incidents in detail, but we believe the allegations are serious enough to warrant special attention in any formal investigation into assaults on civilians during the takeover of Mazar-i Sharif.

A witness living in Kamaz camp stated that some of the Taliban took away young women from the camp at the same time that they were arresting men. She knew of four or five girls who were taken from the camp, all in their early twenties. A witness from the neighborhood of Karte Ariana told Human Rights Watch that she had seen teen-age girls in the area being pushed into the Taliban's Pijaro cars and taken to an unknown destination.

A male medical student who worked and lived in one of the city hospitals for twenty days straight after the takeover stated that he saw one rape case during that time. A Hazara woman, who was a nurse, and her sister had walked to the hospital from Ali Chopan.

The nurse was in a very bad shape, she had sharp stomach pains. I could not examine her because the hospital was full of Talibs. This was a day before they segregated the hospital and put women in the children's building. I just asked a few questions and finally she said that she was raped by the Talibs. She did not say which ones. We could not talk long with the Talibs watching. I could not do much, I just gave her analgesics.

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## **VI. DETENTIONS OF PERSONS TRYING TO LEAVE**

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In the first weeks following the takeover of Mazar, persons trying to leave the city were routinely stopped at checkpoints and searched the vehicles Taliban officials specifically looked for Hazaras. Hazara men who were found in the cars or trucks were detained. The officials also looked for weapons and for pictures, as the Taliban has prohibited these. At one checkpoint outside of Mazar, Taliban soldiers reportedly questioned persons fleeing, "How many Taliban did you kill in Mazar?" apparently referring to the 1997 killings. Those who could convince the authorities that they were not Hazara or who had identity cards from other cities managed to pass.

Other checkpoints where refugees were questioned included Zabul and Qandahar. One witness reported that at Zabul, three men in the family were detained overnight until the family could convince the authorities that they had come from Ghazni. At Qandahar the Taliban told the family that they could not permit Hazaras from Mazar or Bamiyan to pass. The witness's brother, who was twenty-six, was detained for a week along with ten to twelve other Hazaras. They were given little food and water, beaten with cables repeatedly, and told to confess to being fighters. The witness knew other families whose relatives were arrested in Qandahar and had not yet arrived in Pakistan some weeks later.

Several witnesses described detentions in Jalalabad. One witness stated that his father and brother-in-law were arrested in Jalalabad and held for three days without food. Several witnesses described crowded conditions in the jail, with thirty to forty men kept in one room.

Refugees passing through Spin Boldak on the Pakistan border almost invariably were harassed by Taliban authorities. The men in the car were frequently beaten and detained until the family paid the authorities to secure their release. One witness stated that the Taliban asked, “Are you Hazaras?” and then beat them. He said, “We were like footballs.”

## II. ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS FLEEING MAZAR

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As the Taliban advanced northward toward Mazar-i Sharif in mid-July, civilians began to leave the city, with most heading south toward the mountains bordering the predominantly Hazara region of central Afghanistan known as Hazarajat. After the city of Shiberghan, some 130 kilometers southwest of Mazar, fell on August 2, a number of commanders reportedly left with their families. However, many residents did not believe that Mazar would fall so quickly, and the city’s population was largely taken by surprise when Taliban troops entered on August 8. In the ensuing panic, at least hundreds of civilians headed south on the main road out of the city, some in cars or other vehicles but many on foot. In the words of one witness, the road was “black” with people and cars. Many families left as soon as they could after the Taliban arrived on August 8. One witness who fled with his family described “a solid line of people from Mazar to Tangi Awlie,” an area just south of Mazar on the way to the mountains. Another witness stated that the road was so crowded with fleeing civilians that cars drove over the bodies of those killed because there was no way to go around them.

Moving for the most part ahead of the civilian crowd was a contingent of Hizb-i Wahdat troops, estimated by one well-informed source at about 700. The Hizb-i Wahdat forces reportedly robbed civilians of cash and cars as they left. There were also reported to be a number of Junbish and Jamiat troops on the road.

For at least two days after the takeover, the road was hit by rockets fired from Taliban positions west of Mazar. A source interviewed by Human Rights Watch stated that there were most likely BM-21 Grad (Hail) multirocket launchers, commonly known as Katyushas.<sup>11</sup> An unknown number of civilians on the road were also killed when they were bombed by Taliban airplanes; witnesses stated that the bombs scattered hundreds of grenade-sized munitions over a wide area on the road. Eyewitnesses said that hamlets and small markets along the road were also destroyed in bomb and rocket attacks. In one such incident, witnesses said that rockets hit an area called Tangi Shadyan on the southern outskirts of the city at about 12:00 p.m., killing at least fifty. Cars and trucks carrying people were struck, and one witness stated that “people were in pieces” along the road. A witness who left immediately when the Taliban arrived told Human Rights Watch that he and his family carried with them nine bodies of a family that had been killed in a rocket attack on the road, including two women, three men, and four small children, and buried them in farmland on the way to the mountains.

Under international humanitarian law, the military forces retreating on the road were a legitimate military target for the Taliban forces. Many of the troops were also using civilian vehicles commandeered in Mazar-i Sharif, which would have made their identification as combatants difficult if not impossible. However, the Taliban forces were also obligated to take every

precaution to refrain from harming or killing civilians. It is not known how many civilians were on the road in proportion to the combatants, but it is clear that hundreds of civilians were in flight on the road, many of them on foot, and they would have been visible from the air. The rockets and cluster bombs apparently used in the attacks are both notoriously inaccurate anti-personnel weapons designed to cause the maximum number of casualties.

11 THE BM-21 GRAD IS A HEAVY-DUTY TRUCK MOUNTED WITH A FORTY-ROUND MULTIPLE ROCKET LAUNCHER, WHICH CAN FIRE 40 ROUNDS OF 122MM ROCKETS IN 20 SECONDS. THE MAXIMUM RANGE OF THE 122MM ROCKETS IS 15,000 METERS. CHRISTOPHER FOSS, ED., *JANE'S ARMOUR AND ARTILLERY 1993-94*, (SURREY, U.K.: JANE'S INFORMATION GROUP, 1993), PP. 598-9.

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## VII. THE APPLICABLE LAW

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The human rights abuses committed by the Taliban during the capture of Mazar-i Sharif shock the conscience and violate the most elementary principles of international humanitarian law. The Taliban abuses are both too numerous and too self-evident to require an exhaustive list of all relevant international legal standards violated during the offensive. Most pertinently, however, the Taliban's actions violate the provisions of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which lays out the minimum humanitarian rules applicable to every internal armed conflict:

In the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each Party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions:

(1) Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria.

To this end the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:

- (a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, or mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
- (b) taking of hostages;
- (c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment;
- (d) the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgement pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

(2) The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for.

Since Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions is binding on "each Party to the conflict"—that is, it is binding on both governmental and nongovernmental forces—the Taliban currently stands in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

The minimum protections established by Common Article 3 are developed and supplemented by Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which applies to internal armed conflicts "which take place in the territory of a High Contracting Party between its armed forces and dissident armed forces or other organized armed groups which, under responsible command, exercise such control over a part of its territory as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations and to implement this Protocol." (Article 1, 1). Protocol II reiterates the fundamental guarantees laid out in Common Article 3 and adds a range of additional requirements for armed groups to whom the protocol applies. In circumstances in which Protocol II does not directly apply, as in the case of Afghanistan which has not ratified this protocol, it provides authoritative guidance on the implementation of Common Article 3. Of particular relevance here are the provisions of Article 4 of Protocol II which lay out the minimum guarantees for all those persons who are not taking a direct part in the hostilities. Article 4 prohibits "at any time and in place whatsoever" at least the following acts:

- (a) violence to the life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular murder as well as cruel treatment such as torture, mutilation or any form of corporal punishment;
- (b) collective punishments;
- (c) taking of hostages;
- (d) acts of terrorism;
- (e) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault;
- (f) slavery and the slave trade in all their forms;
- (g) pillage;
- (h) threats to commit any of the foregoing acts.

## **VIII. THE TALIBAN'S REPRESSIVE SOCIAL POLICIES**

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Shortly after taking Mazar-i Sharif, the Taliban took steps to impose the system of justice and social codethey have established in other areas of Afghanistan under their control.<sup>12</sup> Women have been ordered not to move outside their homes unless completely covered and accompanied by a close male relative and have been prohibited from working. Girls schools have been closed.<sup>13</sup> Hospitals are segregated by sex, and women may not be treated by male doctors. In other parts of Afghanistan where these policies have been enforced, the consequences for women have been grave. Women responsible for feeding and caring for their families are impoverished when they can neither work nor leave their homes. Women who do go out unaccompanied or

improperly attired have been beaten on the spot. Refugees and health care workers have reported incidents of women who died when denied emergency medical care.

The Taliban's gender policies have seriously strained their relationship with nongovernmental relief organizations and the U.N., leading some groups to scale down programs or threaten to withdraw non-emergency assistance altogether.<sup>14</sup>

**12 THE TALIBAN'S SOCIAL POLICY IS INFORMED BY THE CONSERVATIVE DEOBANDI SCHOOL, AND ITS STRICT INTERPRETATION OF THE SHARIA, OR ISLAMIC LAW, AND BY SOME TRADITIONS OF PASHTUNWALI, THE TRIBAL CODE OF THE PASHTUNS. THE DEOBANDIS, FOLLOWERS OF AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY REFORM MOVEMENT, HAVE CLOSE TIES TO WAHHABISM, A SECT WHICH HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE SAUDI ROYAL FAMILY. EDICTS GOVERNING SOCIAL BEHAVIOR ARE ENFORCED BY THE AMR BIL-MAROOF WA NAHI AN IL-MUNKIR, OR MINISTRY FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF VIRTUE AND SUPPRESSION OF VICE, WHOSE VIGILANCE SQUADS EXACT SUMMARY PUNISHMENT BY BEATING OR DETAINING TRANSGRESSORS. ENFORCEMENT OF THE TALIBAN'S CODE HAS BEEN LESS A PROBLEM FOR AFGHANS LIVING IN RURAL PASHTUN AREAS OF SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN THAN FOR THOSE IN CITIES LIKE HERAT AND KABUL, WHERE THE TALIBAN HAVE FELT LESS SECURE AND HAVE BEEN WARY OF RESISTANCE FROM THE NON-PASHTUN, URBANIZED POPULATION.**

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**13 IN KABUL, GIRLS' SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN ORDERED CLOSED, AND BOYS' SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN CLOSED BECAUSE OF THE PROHIBITION ON WORK BY WOMEN TEACHERS AND THE LACK OF SALARY FOR REMAINING STAFF.. THE TALIBAN HAVE BEEN LESS RIGID IN APPLYING THESE STRICTURES IN QANDAHAR, WHERE SOME GIRLS' SCHOOLS FUNCTION, AND MALE DOCTORS HAVE BEEN PERMITTED TO TREAT FEMALE PATIENTS UNDER STRICT SAFEGUARDS.**

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**14 FOR MORE ON WOMEN'S ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE, SEE PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *THE TALIBAN'S WAR ON WOMEN* (BOSTON: AUGUST 1998). IN THE AFTERMATH OF U.S. AIRSTRIKES ON AUGUST 20 ON ALLEGED TERRORIST TRAINING CAMPS IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE SUBSEQUENT SHOOTING OF TWO U.N. WORKERS IN KABUL, ONE OF WHOM DIED, THE U.N. AND VIRTUALLY EVERY RELIEF GROUP EVACUATED ITS STAFF FROM THE COUNTRY. ON OCTOBER 23, THE U.N. AGREED ON CONDITIONS FOR A RETURN OF U.N. STAFF, INCLUDING EXPLICIT SECURITY GUARANTEES AND A COMMITMENT TO INVESTIGATE THE ATTACK ON U.N. STAFF AND THE KILLING OF THE IRANIAN OFFICIALS DURING THE OFFENSIVE ON MAZAR-I SHARIF.**

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## **IX. CONCLUSION**

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The massacre in Mazar-i Sharif has attracted only passing attention by the outside world and has elicited little outrage even from those countries that have played a part in attempting to construct a peaceful settlement to the Afghan conflict. In part, this is due to the fact that information about the killings and detentions in Mazar-i Sharif has been slow to reach the outside world. Survivors only began to reach Pakistan in early September after an often arduous trek through the

mountains in Afghanistan. In Pakistan, they remain at risk of reprisal from the Taliban. Most, having lost everything in their flight from Mazar, face a bleak future and little assistance as refugees in Pakistan.

The events in Mazar represent the latest chapter in Afghanistan's history of revenge killings. Because every group has its scores to settle in Afghanistan's long war, a thorough investigation of the events in Mazar-i Sharif would represent a first step toward breaking the cycle of violence.

## Chapter 2

### Bamyan Massacres

(Reported by CCA (Cooperation Centre of Afghanistan) Peshawar Pakistan)

Tens of thousands of people who have taken refuge in the mountains are At risk of losing their lives if urgent assistance is not provided. They Need food and protection against the Taliban assaults.

Reports reaching from Bamyan indicate that almost all population of Bamyan center, Yakowlong and the villages located alongside Shiber-yakowlong road Kalu valley have fled from their homes for the Fear of being killed or arrested by the Taliban. Some have gone to Neighboring districts but the majority of the fleeing families are still Wondering about in outskirts of Baba mountain range where the land is Still covered by snow and the weather is severely cold.

Recapturing Bamyan from Hezeb-e-Wahdat the Taliban have destroyed and Burnt the houses of people at Dukani and Haider Abad villages and have Taken 150 people from Borosona village including Women and Children as Captives. These acts have further frightened the civil population.

We strongly ask the UN to deploy to other places in Hazarajat which Are currently controlled by the opposition. Precaution measures are NEEDED TO BE TAKEN SO THAT THE ATROCITIES ON CIVIL POPULATION COULD BE REDUCED.

CCA repeats its call upon warring factions to refrain from any action Against civilian people. We particularly urge the Taliban to release civilian people Whom were arrested recently from Bamyan.

Cooperation center for Afghanistan -----  
4, P/1, Phase IV, Main Road Opposite PDA, hayatabad, Peshawar, Pakistan  
tel: 92-91-816286/ 815647 Fax: 92-91-816386

#### **Killing and Arrestment of Civilians in Bamyan**

An overview of Human Rights situation in Bamyan from September 1998 to middle of May 1999.

In trodution:



Bamyan located in the central highland of Afghanistan called Hazarajat, is populated mostly by Hazras. Bamyan city was the stronghold of Hizb-Wahdat up to September 1998. On 13 September Hiz-Wahdat forces defeted by the Taliban after losing Mazara Sharif city. It was reported the Hizb Wahdat 30 Taliban prisoners who were held in Bamyan prison while leaving the city.

During its rule over Hazarajat particularly Bamyan , Hiz-e-Wahdat failed to maintain law and order properly. Their behavior towards Tajiks living in Bamyan centre, Kohmard and Saighan district was not fair as hundreds of Tajiks preffered to leave Bamyan center during 1996 and 1997.

### **Mass Killing During the Military Operation of The Taliban.**

The Taliban first time entered Bamyan city 13 September 1998 after short fighting on Aghrubut pass. On 15-17 September the Taliban launched a search in Bamyan villages to find out suspect people. During their search they arrested and killed any male members of Hazaraa above thirteen. Arrested people were taken to dessert and then assassinated. Sar Asyabb, Haider Abad and Syed Abad villages were among the villages, which suffered more.

Some people were slaughtered herd and some bodies were cut to pieces. Houses were burnt or destroyed.

I was reported that daed bodies were scattered everywhere. 5 bodies were found in Azhder, three were behind guardroom of Bamyan airport and several bodies were found among trees behind new Bazar. Many people were killed from displaced families who were living around Buddha statues but following the capture of city they went to nearby villages.

Reportedly Abdul Wahid and Maysam two workers of ICRC who decided not to leave their office were also killed.

Number of killed people per village during the Taliban search between 15 to 17 in September 1998, as known by CCA (Cooperation Centre of Afghanistan) reporter is as follow:

<b>Village</b>	<b>Number of Person Killed</b>
Sar-e-Asia	75
Khushkak Chap Dara	11
Taapchi	07
Shibarto	11
Darray Fauladi	37
Dushti Isa Khan and Tajiks	09
Gorvavna and Tai Boti	85
Azhder	05
Jagra Khil	25
Patmasti	15
Surkh Dar	13
Dasht-e-Mulla Khulam	21
Airport area	03

Kallu	28
Bazar	17
Village between Shaikh Ali and Sheebar	150
Total:	

It was on the second day of the Taliban presence in Bamyan, that two groups of non-Afghan Talibs based in Iranian Consulate building and Bamyan Laycee (High School) targeted the small Buddha by Tank and BM 40 Artillery. These shelling caused some damages in the lower part of its body. Then climbing the statue, they dug its head, filled it with explosive stuff and set it off. The explosion defaced small Buddha and created some cracks in its body.

### **Looting and Confiscation:**

230 Trucks ( Kamazand ten wheelers Trucks) were taken by different groups of the Taliban. The Taliban promised to return looted trucks but so far only two trucks have been given back to the owners. There were also reports of looting of the people 's household's furniture and public properties.

### **Suspension as Preventive Measures: (March 1999.)**

Harassments of civilians continued under the Taliban rule, which broaden the gap between the people and the Talib.

When the snow began to melt Hiz-e-Wahdat forces returning from their mountainous refuge, capture Yakaulang district Taliban became suspicious about the affiliation of Bamyan people with the opposition forces. So, they took around 550 people as hostages and transferred them to different prisons in Parwan and Kabul, Kandahar citiy. Among the arrested people were members of council, which was found by the Taliban, namely: Sayed Adil Kazmi, Paykar from Fatmasti. Natiqi from Kushkak, Shaikh Emami from Surmara and Shaikh Zaki from Kalu.

On 28 of March following an uprising the Taliban forces leded by Mulla Abdul Wahid Ghourbandi destroyed and burnt the villages located on the road between Sheebar and Bamyan city including Shashpul, Ahangraan.

They aalso burnt Surkh Qool and other villages located in Kalu valley. People living in these villages were forcibly evacuated. Two Takya Khanas (Mosques) in Sar Asyab and Gurvana villages were also burnt.

### **Human Rights Violation By Hiz Wahdat: ( 21 April to 15 May 1999)**

Supression of civilian people in Bamyan resulted in reverse and prompted themto support the oppoision forces. On April 21 the Taliban were forced to retreat from Bamyan in the face of of an offensive by the forces of Hiz Wahdat.

Hiz Wahdat forces had the control of Bamyan for three weeks, It was reported

That they arrested 11 drivers and 25 passengers that were passing by through Bamyan on the road from Behsood to Bamyan. They were arrested because of their ethnicity. ( They released by the Taliban on May 9<sup>th</sup>. When they recaptured Bamyan).

### **Atrocities during the second military operation of the Taliban May 9<sup>th</sup> and onward:**

The fall of Bamyan to the opposition considered a big set back to the Taliban. Therefore the Taliban massed four thousand troops for recapturing of Bamyan. The operation was led by high ranking commanders of Taliban including Maulavi Abdul Kabir Deputy to the acting Shura. Mulla brother Akhund, head of the East-West zone, Mulla Fazal Akhund, chief of military crops and Mulla Abdul Wahid, Ghourbandi a frontline commander.

The Taliban retook the Bamyan on 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1999. Entering Bamyan city they killed everyone they saw. The number of killed people is not known so far has been estimated to be hundreds. Most of the population evacuated the city and took refuge in the mountainsides.

They are facing seriously with hunger, weather in mountainous areas is cold and the land is still snow full. It was reported that a group of 150 people including men, women and children have been taken as captives by the Taliban from Bersona village and have been transferred to Parwan province.

Yakawlang was also evacuated by the people for the fear of being killed or arrested by the Taliban. A few families could manage to reach Ghazni while some others have gone to Panjab or Behsood districts.

S.No.	Name	Fathers Name	Age	Gender	Religion	Province
1	Abdul Rahoof	Haji M. Haider	50	Male	Muslim Shi'a	Bamyan
2	Noor Aqa	Mohd. Mohseen	17	=	=	=
3	Sofi Ahmed Ali	M. Ghulam Nabi	65	=	=	=
4	Khai din	M. Ghulam Nabi	50	=	=	=
5	Fatah	Nadir Tahweldar	25	=	=	=
6	Damir	Nadir Tahweldar	16	=	=	=
7	Aslamudin	Haji Ahmed Ali	18	=	=	=
8	Aminullah	Sofoi Muhammadullah	30	=	=	=
9	Ghafoor	Amir Muhammad	40	=	=	=
10	Rafiullah	Basmullah	18	=	=	=
11	Shujaullah	Hayat ullah	20	=	=	=
12	Sanagul	Noor Mohammad	25	=	=	=
13	Abdul Hakeem	Abdul Ahad	35	=	=	=

14	Hassan	Jan Mohammad	20	Male	Muslim	Bamyan
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		Hussain				
17	AbdulHamid	Abdullah	35	=	=	=
18	Aziz	Abdullah	40	=	=	=
19	Ghulam Sarwar	Haji Ghulam M.	42	=	=	=
20	Sultan M.	M. Karim	42	=	=	Gunbad kalo
21	Sultan M.	Ali nasir	20	=	=	=
22	M.Reza	Faqir Hussain	24	=	=	=
23	Ali hussain	Merza hussain	43	=	=	=
24	M. hussain	Taleb	25	=	=	=
25	Azizullah	Saufuallah	33	=	=	=
26	M. Zaher	Ramazan	32	=	=	=
27	M. Raof	Hussain Bakhsh	35	=	=	=
28	M. Esmail	Nowroz	45	=	=	=
29	M. Reza	Khan Mohammad	21	=	=	=
30	Qurban Ali	M. Ismail	15	=	=	=
31	Ali Reza	M. Reza	48	=	=	=
32	Ghulam M.	M. hussain	49	=	=	=
33	M.yusuf	M.Ashaq	25	=	=	=
34	Mhram Ali	Merza Hussain	46	=	=	=
35	Merza Ali	M. Yaqub	37	=	=	=
36	M. Ayub	M. Yaqub	45	=	=	=
37	Karim Dad	M. Hussain	36	=	=	=
38	M. Bahrad	Hussain Dad	24	=	=	=
39	M> Yasin	Muhmen	30	=	=	=
40	Hussain Ali	Fazli Ahmad	38	=	=	=
41	M. Zaher	Fazli Ahmad	29	=	=	=
42	M. Hussain		33	=	=	=
43	Azizullah	Ali Ahmad	45	=	=	=
44	Khuda Bakhsh	MerzaHussain	37	=	=	=
45	M.Naqi	Abdul Karim	25	=	=	=
46	Haider Ali	Shaber M.	50	=	=	=
47	Qambar Ali	MuhterAli	47	=	=	=
48	Muhrab Ali	Rajab Ali	37	=	=	=
49	Hussain Ali	Rajab	30	=	=	=
51	Ahmad Jan	Ramazan	20	=	=	=
50	Ahmad Hussain	Abdul Hain	48	=	=	=
52	Esmail	Sakhi Dad	21	=	=	=
53	Noor	M.Nasim	22	=	=	=
54	Esmail	Aywaz Ali	33	=	=	Sadbark Kalo
55	Muhur Ali	Mharam Ali	50	=	=	
Shibar	Married 8/3/99	Siaggerd	Action			

			had no positive result			
56	Karim Bakhsh	Hussain Bakhsh	55	=	=	=
57	Paynda Khan	Kalawar	53	=	=	=
58	Ismail	Hussain Bakhsh	48	=	=	Sad bark Kalo
59	Azizullah	Rajab Ali	40	=	=	=
60	Abdul Wahed	Khudadad	25	=	=	Ahanggaran
61	Abdul Khalid	Khudadad	18	=	=	=
62	Gul Muhammad	Faiz Ali	60	=	=	Paimory
63	Rahim Bakhsh	Faiz Ali	50	=	=	=
64	Alah Dad	Khudadad	25	=	=	=
66	Ismail	Abraham	30	=	=	=
65	Ali Hussain	Abdul	23	=	=	=
67	Hussain	Hussain Ali	40	=	=	=
68	M. Hussain	Hussain Ali	26	=	=	=
8/3/99	siaggerd	Action had noit positive result				
69	Ghulam Reza	Hussain Ali	30	=	=	=
70	Barat	Aiwaz	42	=	=	=
71	Mussa	Aiwaz	30	=	=	=
72	S.Qasem	S.Abrahim	40	=	=	=
73	A. Ismail	S. Jan M.	47	=	=	=
74	S. Nazer	S. Hussain	35	=	=	=
75	Hussain	Khaliq Dad	33	=	=	=
76	Ghulam Sakhi	M. Nasim	35	=	=	=
77	Rajab Ali	Merza	32	=	=	=
78	Abas	Merza	28	=	=	=
79	Sultan Ali	Murad Ali	27	=	=	=
80	Khadem Hussain	Noor Ahmad	42	=	=	=
81	M. Ali	Bakhtiari	55	=	=	Shibar
8/3/99	siaggerd	Action had not positive result				
82	Ghulam Sakhi	Bakhtiari	28	=	=	=
83	Ghulam Nabi	Bakhtiari	24	=	=	=
84	Abas	Bakhtiari	14	=	=	=
85	Sutan	M. Akbar	60	=	=	=
86	Khadem Hussain					
87	Ghafoor	Qanber	35	=	=	=
88	Razaq	Abdul Hassan	40	=	=	=
89	Aziz	Gul Ali	32	=	=	=
90	Ahman	Gul Ali	30	=	=	=
91	Jan Ali	Mohd. Qadam	38	=	=	=
92	Mohammad	Rajab Ali	18	=	=	=

93	Amir Hussain	Ali Hussain	32	=	=	=
94	Karim Baksh	Haji Hussain Baksh	40	=	=	=
95	Painda	Gul Ali	42	=	=	=
96	Hussain Dad	Haji Khudad	50	=	=	=
97	Sakhi dad	Haji Khudad	32	=	=	=
98	Ali Ahmad	Haji Khudadad	28	=	=	=
99	Mohsin	Haji Ghulam Nabi	45	=	=	=
100	Muheb Ali	Haji Ghulam Nabi	37	=	=	=
101	S.Sha Ayaz	S. Ashaq	40	=	=	=
102	Haji Hussain	S. Askar	50	=	=	=
103	HussainAli	M. Haider	55	=	=	=
104	Haji Jawad	Ghulam Hussain	56	=	=	=
105	Khadem Hussain	Ayaz	40	=	=	=
106	Aqa Zia	Haji Jawad	30	=	=	=
107	S. Abbase	Ahmed Ali	60	=	=	=
108	S. TAher	S. Yaqoob	65	=	=	=

List of dead person has been handed over to Taliban's high comman through Kamal Hussain especial representatives of Kofi Anna for Afghanistan Human Rights during his short visit to Quetta Alamdar road Sura-e Namak, and Mariabad. (Compiler)

# Chapter 3

## Yakaulang Massacres

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## I. SUMMARY

This report documents two massacres committed by Taliban forces in the central highlands of Afghanistan, in January 2001 and May 2000. In both cases the victims were primarily Hazaras, a Shia Muslim ethnic group that has been the target of previous massacres and other serious human rights violations by Taliban forces. These massacres took place in the context of the six-year war between the Taliban and parties now grouped in the United National Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (the “United Front”), in which international human rights and humanitarian law have been repeatedly violated by the warring factions. Ethnic and religious minorities, and the Hazaras in particular, have been especially vulnerable in areas of conflict, and Taliban forces have committed large-scale abuses against Hazara civilians with impunity. In this report Human Rights Watch calls upon the United Nations to investigate both massacres and to systematically monitor human rights and humanitarian law violations by all parties to Afghanistan’s civil war.

The massacre in Yakaolang district began on January 8, 2001 and continued for four days. In the course of conducting search operations following the recapture of the district from two Hazara-based parties in the United Front, the Taliban detained about 300 civilian adult males, including staff members of local humanitarian organizations. The men were herded to assembly points in the center of the district and several outlying areas, and then shot by firing squad in public view. About 170 men are confirmed to have been killed. The killings were apparently intended as a collective punishment for local residents whom the Taliban suspected of cooperating with United Front forces, and to deter the local population from doing so in the future. The findings concerning events in Yakaolang are based on the record of interviews with eyewitnesses that were made available to Human Rights Watch and other corroborating evidence.

The May 2000 massacre took place near the Robatak pass on the border between Baghlan and Samangan provinces. Thirty-one bodies were found at one site to the northwest of the pass. Twenty-six of the dead were positively identified as civilians from Baghlan province. Of the latter, all were unlawfully detained for four months and some were tortured before they were killed. Human Rights Watch’s findings in this case are based in large part on interviews with a worker who participated in the burials and with a relative of a detainee who was executed at Robatak. These accounts have been further corroborated by other independent sources. With respect to both massacres, all names of sources, witnesses, and survivors have been withheld.

Mullah Mohammad Omar, the head of the Taliban movement, has stated that there is no evidence of a civilian massacre in Yakaolang and blocked journalists from visiting the district, until recently accessible only by crossing Taliban-held territory. On the night of February 13-14, 2001, however, United Front forces recaptured Bamiyan city, the provincial capital. The offensive secured an airport and a road link to Yakaolang.

On January 19, 2001, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued a statement expressing concern about “numerous credible reports” that civilians were deliberately targeted and killed in Yakaolang. The secretary-general called on the Taliban to take “immediate steps to control their forces,” adding that the reports required “prompt investigation” and that those



responsible should “be brought to justice.”<sup>1</sup> On February 16, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson called for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry into human rights violations in Afghanistan. Human Rights Watch is concerned that such a commission would take too long to establish; the need is for a small team of experts that could be deployed immediately.

The Taliban’s denial of responsibility for the Yakaolang massacre, and its failure to hold its commanders accountable for these and other abuses against civilians by its forces, make it critical that the U.N. itself investigate both cases. There have been preliminary discussions within the U.N. on the feasibility of investigating the Yakaolang massacre; a similar discussion also took place after the Robatak massacre, although no further action was taken. These discussions should be resumed. In doing so, however, the U.N. should not repeat the missteps that resulted in an inconclusive 1999 field investigation by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, into the 1997 killing of Taliban prisoners by United Front forces in Mazar-i Sharif and the reprisal massacre of Hazara civilians by Taliban forces the following year. To allow an effective investigation into the cases documented in this report, the U.N. should adopt the measures outlined below.

## **II. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **To the United Nations, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, and the Islamic State of Afghanistan:**

Human Rights Watch urges the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other relevant U.N. agencies to undertake an immediate investigation into the massacres in question, and urges the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (the administration established by the Taliban movement) and the Islamic State of Afghanistan (the administration established by the United Front) to cooperate fully with her office to ensure that an impartial inquiry is carried out speedily.

Any U.N. investigation should include the following measures:

- The investigation into the Yakaolang massacre in particular should begin promptly while there is still an opportunity to collect physical evidence.
  - The investigation team should include persons qualified to conduct human rights investigations in the field under the constraints likely to obtain at both sites, and should include a forensic expert with experience in exhumations of graves and analysis of remains.
  - The terms of reference should provide clear guidelines for the work of the investigation team and the scope of its report, including in particular:
    1. Identification of individuals, including senior military officers and government officials, responsible for giving orders or otherwise directing actions of their subordinates that violate human rights and humanitarian law.
-

2. Identification of patterns of abuses, including ethnicity or other characteristics of persons targeted for arrest or killing, neighborhoods targeted, and so on.
  - The High Commissioner should communicate the findings of the investigation to relevant authorities in Afghanistan, and urge them to prosecute persons identified as responsible for crimes.
  - The High Commissioner should use the findings to determine to what extent there have been violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including grave breaches that would be subject to possible war crimes prosecutions.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should then prosecute those commanders found responsible for the arbitrary killings before a tribunal in hearings that are fully open to the public and conducted in accordance with international standards on fair trials.

Human Rights Watch does not underestimate the difficulty of undertaking an investigation, given the logistical, security, and political difficulties involved. The area where the most recent massacre took place has changed hands several times. It has been difficult for U.N. agencies to get access to the area, and no one has been stationed there permanently because of security concerns. The sanctions threatened by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1333 (2000), including closing the Taliban offices in New York, have led to increased tension with the U.N. The U.N. should nevertheless make a credible request to investigate and be prepared for an immediate response to take advantage of any opportunities offered by changing political and military circumstances. This means having the necessary expertise and resources lined up, with fallback options for each contingency.

### **To the European Community**

The Common Position of the Council of the European Union on Afghanistan, adopted in January 24, 2000, states that it is an objective of the European Union to “promote respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, including the rights of women and children.” E.U. members should further this objective by adopting measures that include investigating human rights and humanitarian law violations in Afghanistan through coordinated initiatives by member states’ embassies in neighboring countries, such as Pakistan and Tajikistan, where they can gain access to refugees.

### **III. BACKGROUND**

Hazaras form a majority of the population in the central highland region of Afghanistan known as Hazarajat, and are a significant minority in the cities of Kabul and Mazar-i Sharif.<sup>2</sup> Most are Imami Shia Muslims, recognizing the leadership of a succession of twelve Imams beginning with the Prophet Muhammad’s son-in-law Ali. A minority are Ismaili Shia, who look for leadership to the lineal descendants of the sixth Shia Imam, represented today by the Aga Khan. In either case, the religious identity of the Hazaras sharply distinguishes them from the Sunni Muslims who predominate in most other regions of the country and has contributed to their political and economic marginalization by successive regimes in Kabul.

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The emergence in 1994 of the Taliban, militant Sunni Muslims who tend to regard Shia as not being true Muslims,<sup>3</sup> threatened to further undermine the Hazaras' position. This fear appeared to be realized in August 1998, when Taliban forces in the multiethnic northern city of Mazar-i Sharif killed at least 2,000 civilians—most of whom were Hazaras. The killings were partly in reprisal for the summary execution in May 1997 of some 2,000 Taliban prisoners by ethnic Hazara and Uzbek forces, but there was also a sectarian component to the Taliban's actions. In the immediate aftermath of the city's occupation by the Taliban, the newly installed governor, Mullah Manon Niazi, delivered public speeches in which he termed the Hazaras infidels and threatened them with death if they did not convert to Sunni Islam or leave Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> Hundreds of civilians fled south toward Hazarajat, accompanied by retreating forces of the Shia party, Hizb-i Wahdat, amid rocket fire and aerial bombardment.

Most of Hazarajat, which had been governed by various factions of the Shia party Hizb-i Wahdat since 1989, fell to the Taliban in September 1998 after a crippling year-long blockade. Despite the apprehensions of many local residents, the transition involved far fewer civilian casualties than had been the case in Mazar-i Sharif. Some observers attributed this to an alliance that was forged with the Taliban by Hujjat-al-Islam Sayyid Mohammad Akbari, a Hizb-i Wahdat faction leader, shortly after the Taliban seized Bamiyan, the major city in Hazarajat and the capital of a district and province of the same name. The Taliban subsequently withdrew most non-local forces from several districts of Hazarajat, leaving them under the nominal control of Akbari appointees or other Shia commanders. The Taliban directly administered Bamiyan, Yakaolang, and a few other districts.<sup>5</sup>

As of February 2001, several enclaves within Hazarajat remained under the control of a Hizb-i Wahdat faction led by Karim Khalili, a leading Shia mullah. In some areas, Hizb-i Wahdat governed with the support of an allied Shia party, Harakat-i Islami. Both Hizb-i Wahdat and Harakat-i Islami are members of the United Front, a loose and often fractious coalition of mainly Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara parties, which in early 2001 together controlled about 10 percent of Afghanistan's territory. Two of these enclaves, the districts of Balkhob and Dar-i Suf, sustained aerial bombardment by the Taliban during 1999 and 2000, prompting a renewed exodus of Hazara refugees to Iran.

Yakaolang district continued to be contested after its occupation by the Taliban in September 1998. Khalili's Hizb-i Wahdat faction and Harakat-i Islami briefly retook control of Yakaolang at the end of 1998 and Bamiyan district in April 1999. However, they lost both districts in May of that year, after heavy fighting in Bamiyan. On December 28, 2000, Hizb-i Wahdat and Harakat-i Islami forces again occupied Yakaolang. The few Taliban defenders fled.<sup>6</sup>

#### **IV. MASSACRE IN YAKAOLANG, JANUARY 2001**

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On January 7, Taliban forces began advancing on Yakaolang from Bamiyan in a bid to recapture the district. Moving westwards, they established their rear base at Feroz Bahar, east of the center of town, from which they launched three main thrusts. The first attack met with stiff resistance on the hill to the east of Dar-i Ali, a valley in which a number of villages are clustered. The Taliban forces were compelled to retreat and call for reinforcements after losing some thirty of their men. The second attack, which contained the main column of troops, was held up at Surkh Kotal, near Zulflucht, for about four hours until the Hizb-i Wahdat forces retreated. After breaking through the defensive line at Surkh Kotal, the Taliban proceeded to Nayak, the district center, without further resistance, reaching it on the morning of January 8. A witness described the Taliban advance:<sup>7</sup>

On the evening of the January 7, a friend told me that a helicopter had been heard flying into Feroz Bahar. Initially people thought that it was supplying the United Front troops, but it turned out that it had been flying in Taliban troops. That night there were sounds of heavy fighting. In the morning again, we heard intense firing, and there was clearly a battle going on in Nayak. Later that morning Nayak fell and the fighting was over.... From 2:00 p.m. on January 8 we watched United Front troops retreating, walking past us and with their mounted column, heading west towards lower Yakaolang. There were so many of them that it took the rest of the day for them to pass us—they were trooping past us until late evening. They were heading for Deh Surkh and Daga.

Upon reaching the district center, the Taliban organized eleven search parties. They were each allocated a sector of central Yakaolang and moved from house to house within their respective sectors, rounding up male occupants. The search party allocated to Dar-i Ali commandeered twelve horses and so was able to travel extensively through the valley, only part of which is accessible by road.

Another witness described the Taliban's capture of the district and the search operations in Dar-i Ali. He first learned of the Taliban advance when Hizb-i Wahdat troops stationed near his office informed him that a helicopter had landed at Feroz Bahar, and that they believed a Taliban attack was imminent. Between midnight and 3:00 a.m. there was heavy fighting all around the area. When there was a lull in the fighting at 3:00 a.m., the witness fled to Dar-i Ali. After about 8:00 a.m., the fighting stopped. At approximately 3:00 p.m., he went to a friend's house that was nearby and asked if he could wait there. The family told him that the Taliban were conducting searches and that it would not be safe. After leaving his friend's house, the witness encountered a group of Taliban troops who ordered him to join a crowd of men who were being herded towards a local aid agency.

The witness saw three bodies lying in front of the aid agency. The Taliban soldiers said that they were men who had tried to run away.<sup>8</sup> The witness described what happened next:

A group of about one hundred men was gathered at the [aid] center. After some time the Taliban ordered us to move, and we were herded down towards

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Nayak [the district center]. At first the pace was slow, but after some time we were met by a group of mounted Taliban and the soldiers started to whip the detainees and ordered us to move more quickly. When we got to Nayak, another group of Taliban was waiting there at the entrance to the bazaar, armed with sticks. They beat us and told the Taliban in charge of the group to “take them to the Mullah.”<sup>9</sup>

According to other witnesses, the detainees were herded to the office of a relief agency located in Nayak, where most were later executed.

As reports of detentions and killings began to circulate through the district, groups of village elders sought meetings with Taliban commanders to ensure the security of their communities. According to a witness:

The same day [January 10] news came that the Taliban were searching houses as far as Girdbayd, some five kilometers from Nayak. People coming from there said that the Taliban had killed some of the people there. We all discussed among ourselves whether this could be true or not. After a couple of days [January 11 or 12], eight or ten of the village elders decided that they must go to Nayak to discuss the security of the area with the Taliban. They set off on foot towards Nayak.

The following is his account of what the elders told him:

On the way there, near Qala Issa Khan [a hamlet about 500 meters west of Nayak, also known as Qala Arbab Hassan], the elders saw Jan Agha, a local Tajik commander, sitting in a Taliban “Datsun” (a pickup truck).<sup>10</sup> Jan Agha was gesticulating at the elders, pointing to something in the village, but they could not work out what it was, and so they proceeded.

The elders walked into Nayak unchallenged and went straight to the Taliban command post. They asked to see Commander Mullah Abdul Sattar, but he refused to see them. Then they managed to find Commander Haji Faqoori and after some persuasion, he managed to get Commander Sattar to see them. Sattar told the elders that he had just received orders from Kandahar, from Mullah [Mohammad] Omar [the head of the Taliban movement], declaring a general amnesty. He instructed the elders to go and meet with [Hizb-i Wahdat commander] Khalili and tell him not to fight any more, or there would be more killing.

On their return, Jan Agha told the elders what he had been pointing to and they saw a pile of bodies at the edge of Qala Issa Khan.

According to the same witness, the elders subsequently met with Khalili, but he refused to stop fighting. Fearful of further conflict, the witness said, many local residents started to leave the area.

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On at least two occasions, the Taliban killed delegations of Hazara elders who had attempted to intercede with them. On January 9, elders of Kata Khana gathered to meet with the Taliban. The Taliban arrested the entire group and killed everyone except two neighborhood leaders. In another case, the elders of Bed Mushkin village met with the Taliban to discuss security for the area. All were killed except one.<sup>11</sup>

The main execution site in Yakaolang appears to have been outside the relief agency in Nayak where the detainees from Dar-i Ali were killed. Witnesses also reported seeing piles of bodies in four other locations in and around Nayak: outside the district hospital, in the ravine behind the mosque in the old bazaar area, outside the prayer hall of Mindayak village, and at Qala Arbab Hassan. Of these, the largest pile of bodies was at Qala Arbab Hassan. Other killings were reported from neighborhoods in areas surrounding the district center, including outside the leprosy and tuberculosis clinics. A witness who visited Yakaolang district four weeks after the incident inspected one of the mass graves at Bed Mushkin village, in which twenty-six bodies had been found. One of the bodies was that of a seventeen-year-old boy, Mir Ali, much of whose skin had been removed either prior to or after his death.<sup>12</sup> In a separate case, seven men were shot dead at the Zarin crossroad near the leprosy clinic in Yakaolang.<sup>13</sup>

Eyewitnesses reported that personnel of the Center for Cooperation on Afghanistan (CCA), a local aid agency—identified as Sayyid Sarwar and Sayyid Talib—were among the civilians rounded up in Dar-i Ali and executed outside the relief agency office. Other staff members of relief agencies were identified among those killed. These included a driver named Daoud who was working for an international humanitarian agency; a man named Qasim who worked as an assistant in the leprosy clinic; and Sayyid Ibrahim and a man named Tahsili, both of whom worked in the district hospital and were staff members of a local assistance organization. Witnesses reported seeing a Land Cruiser and a Russian-made jeep in the possession of the Taliban, both of which belonged to the Yakaolang offices of humanitarian aid organizations.<sup>14</sup>

Several staff members of another local leprosy clinic were also identified among those killed: Sayyid Yakut, a gardener from the village of Kata Khana, near the center of Yakaolang district; a man named Taqi, a carpenter, from Akhundun village; Gul Agha, son of Mahmood, of Sarasiab village; and Sayyid Mahdi, son of Burki, a watchman, also from Sarasiab. One of the center's leprosy patients, Sayyid Amir of Panj-o-ak village, was also reported killed.

Taliban forces were only able to remain in Yakaolang for two weeks, before being driven out of the district again on January 23. While retreating north through the Dar-i Shikari valley, on or about January 20, a convoy of Taliban forces encountered a group of Hazara herders at Tala Burfak. Apparently frustrated that their path was blocked by the Hazaras' herds, some of the Taliban fired gunshots at the group, killing three of them on the spot.<sup>15</sup>

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The armed conflict in Yakaolang and the abuses committed in the district by the Taliban resulted in massive internal displacement. Humanitarian aid workers estimate that thousands of persons from Yakaolang took refuge in Panjao and Lal districts, the Tarpuch sub-district of Balkhob district, the Kashan valley in Kohistanat district, and Dar-i Chasht in Lower Yakaolang district.

## **V. MASSACRE AT ROBATAK PASS, MAY 2000**

The massacre in Yakaolang follows previous attacks by the Taliban on Hazaras and members of other ethnic minorities in north central Afghanistan. The provinces of Baghlan and Samangan, which lie north of Bamiyan, have seen intermittent fighting between Taliban and United Front forces since 1998. As a means of controlling the civilian population and ensuring that it does not give assistance to the United Front, Taliban forces have frequently resorted to detaining men from villages in the area and holding them for prolonged periods as virtual hostages.<sup>16</sup>

In May 2000, Taliban forces summarily executed a group of civilian detainees near the Robatak pass, which lies along the road connecting the towns of Tashkurgan and Pul-i Khumri. Until a systematic forensic investigation is carried out, the precise number of those killed cannot be known, but Human Rights Watch has obtained confirmation of thirty-one bodies at the execution site, twenty-six of which have been identified as the bodies of Ismaili Shia Hazara civilians from Baghlan province. Their remains were found to the northeast of the Robatak pass, in an area known as Hazara Mazari, on the border between Baghlan and Samangan provinces. The area was controlled by the Taliban at the time of the executions. There are reported to be as many as three other gravesites near the pass.

All of those who have been identified were detained for four months before being killed; many of them were tortured before they were killed. The men were taken from their homes by Taliban troops between January 5 and January 14, 2000. The facilities at which the men were detained were under the command of Commander Mullah Shahzad Kandahari, who was the Taliban commander of the Khinjan front north of Kabul and who was also reportedly present in Yakaolang when it was held by the Taliban in January 2001.

On January 5, 2000, a Taliban force raided the village cluster of Naikpai, in Doshi district of Baghlan province. The Taliban soldiers came in a convoy of pickup trucks at dawn. They started to round up men from Bakas, Zaighola, and other hamlets in Naikpai, seizing many of them in their houses. A number of those who were arrested were village elders. There were many other people present and virtually the entire population of the village witnessed the arrests. Local residents assumed that the arrests were a warning to deter them from having contacts with United Front forces.<sup>17</sup>

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The house-to-house searches and arrests continued for nine days. While they were underway, the detainees were held at Mullah Shahzad's operational military base at Khinjan. Relatives of the detainees were allowed to visit the base, and were informed of conditions in the facility by the detainees.<sup>18</sup> The men who were detained between approximately January 5 and 10 were subjected to severe beatings with electric cables and were forced to stand outside in sub-zero temperatures and snow. One of those who was later killed near the Robatak pass, Sayyid Tajuddin, who was thirty-eight, suffered frostbite as a result of the exposure following his beating. When the detainees were transferred to Pul-i Khumri, he was admitted to the Textile Factory hospital. Both feet were amputated there, and he was provided with a pair of locally fabricated crutches.<sup>19</sup>

At the end of the operation, around January 14, all of the detainees were transferred to Pul-i Khumri, where Shahzad maintained his rear base. The detainees were held in the residential quarters attached to the Pul-i Khumri Textile Mill. On or around May 8, the detainees were removed from the facility. When relatives inquired as to their whereabouts they were ordered by the authorities to leave the area. However, a staff member of the facility informed them that the men had been loaded onto a single truck, thought to be a "kalafil" truck of Soviet manufacture, during the evening. The truck was reportedly escorted by a Taliban Toyota pickup.<sup>20</sup> The prisoners were later found dead at Hazara Mazari, a journey of approximately one-and-a-half hours from the detention facility. The men are believed to have been shot the same night that they were taken from the facility.

On or around May 18, shepherds from the Robatak pass area reported the presence of bodies to the provincial authorities in Samangan. The mayor of Samangan detailed a party of ten workmen, with an escort of Taliban troops, to locate and bury the bodies at the Hazara Mazari site.

It was apparent from the appearance of the bodies that the detainees had been brought to the execution site with their hands bound behind their backs, and tied together by their forearms in groups of three, according to a worker who assisted in the burials. Twenty-eight of the victims were found lying where had been were shot, face down on the ground. The execution party had made no attempt to remove or cover the bodies.<sup>21</sup> The body of another man, identified as Sahib Dad, was found tied to a tree, his arms and legs each tied separately with a length of rope in such a way that his captors would have been able to manipulate them while he was immobilized.<sup>22</sup>

The workmen buried the twenty-nine bodies at the Hazara Mazari site. The burial was perfunctory. The bodies were covered with at most thirty centimeters of earth, inadequate to protect them from wild animals. The worker who assisted in the burials described what he saw:

The bodies were lying on the ground face down. All of their hands were bound behind their backs.... The bullet wounds could not be made out on the

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backs but there was blood on the ground beneath the chests. I saw the bodies about four days after they had been killed. Their backs had not been blown up but the blood had obviously poured out of the chests and I understood that they had been killed by firing into the back because there was no visible wound on any other part of the bodies and they were lying in pools of blood that had poured out of their chests. They were tied together in groups of three using their turbans and scarves which had been wound together to make ropes. They were tied together one to the other, using their own turbans.... To tell you the truth we were so terrified and upset that we barely dared look at the ground. You could hardly stand there.<sup>23</sup>

Soon after the workmen returned, word reached Naikpai that some of its people were among the dead. A group of residents went to inspect the gravesites, where they found shallow graves and recognized bits of clothing belonging to their missing relatives. They also found two more bodies at a short distance from the others; the two men had been shot and their bodies were left where they fell.

Since the massacre, the Robatak area has remained under Taliban control. Local human rights researchers visited the site at Hazara Mazari in November 2000 and photographed the remains that were visible from the surface. Some of those photographs are appended to this report.

The actual number of persons killed at Robatak may be much higher than the thirty-one that Human Rights Watch has been able to confirm. Other gravesites have been reported at different locations near the pass. However, the researchers believe that if there were bodies at these sites, they may have been disturbed or moved by Taliban authorities as no remains were visible from the surface.

The motive for the prisoners' killing remains unclear. The killings took place just after the Taliban and the United Front had negotiated an agreement on a prisoner exchange during a summit meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, held under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.<sup>24</sup> And during the same time period, United Front forces appear to have attacked and killed Taliban troops in ambushes along the road that runs through the Robatak pass.<sup>25</sup>

## **VI. ACCOUNTABILITY**

Mullah Mohammad Omar, the head of the Taliban movement, stated in late January 2001 that there was no evidence of a civilian massacre in Yakaolang, but in the same interview retracted an earlier offer to allow journalists to visit the area.<sup>26</sup>

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The identity of those Taliban soldiers who actually carried out the killings in each case has yet to be established. However, eyewitness testimony and Taliban radio broadcasts have helped to identify some of the Taliban commanders who were present in Yakaolang, while information about the Taliban command structure points to the commanders with responsibility for the conduct of Taliban forces in Baghlan at the time of the Robatak detentions and killings. One commander, Mullah Shahzad Kandahari, appears to have been involved in both operations.

As general commander of the Khinjan front in Baghlan province during the first half of 2000, Mullah Shahzad had authority over the detention facilities in Khinjan and Pul-i Khumri, where the Robatak prisoners were held, and was in command of the troops stationed in the area. The Taliban Chief Military Commander for the Northern Zone (Fifth Corps, based in Mazar-i Sharif), Mullah Abdul Razak Nawfiz, was the immediate superior officer of Mullah Shahzad, and was responsible for directing his operations and briefing him on Taliban strategy and policy. He was also the official who would have had primary responsibility for investigating crimes by the commander and preventing further abuses.

Witnesses have testified that Mullah Shahzad was also in command of some of the Taliban troops in Yakaolang. Other Taliban commanders in Yakaolang included Qari Ahmadullah of Ghazni, the minister of intelligence, who reportedly issued a statement from Yakaolang on the Taliban-operated Radio Shariat.<sup>27</sup> Also present were Mullah Abdul Sattar, at the time the regional military commander for Hazarajat; Mullah Abdullah Sarhadi, the former regional military commander for Hazarajat; and Mullah Abdul Salam "Rocketi," a former commander with the Ittihad-i Islami party.<sup>28</sup> Further investigation is necessary to determine what role, if any, they may have played in the massacres.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The two massacres of civilians described in this report constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law. They raise grave concerns about the security of civilian populations in Taliban-administered areas, particularly Hazaras and members of other ethnic or religious minorities. What has emerged from these cases, as well as prior events in Hazarajat and northern Afghanistan, is a pattern of efforts to intimidate minority populations and to deter them from cooperating with the United Front, through the arbitrary detention and summary execution of male civilians. These abuses, including the massacre at Yakaolang and the detention of civilians prior to their execution at Robatak, have frequently been of such a scale and duration that they could not have been carried out without the knowledge and consent of senior Taliban commanders.

Impartially amassing an exhaustive record of the events in both cases and identifying the commanders responsible will require an independent investigation under the auspices of the United Nations. Such an investigation could have a significant impact in deterring further abuses by all of the warring factions in Afghanistan.

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However, the United Nations has failed to systematically monitor and document abuses in Afghanistan. The only field investigation undertaken by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights—into the killings in Mazar-i Sharif in 1997 and 1998—failed to make use of existing evidence to establish responsibility for extrajudicial executions and other abuses committed by United Front forces in 1997 and by the Taliban in 1998. It also neglected to make use of extensive testimony from refugees, or of detailed information gathered by U.N. staff and offices. Other monitoring mechanisms have been impeded by a lack of access or adequate security. The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, Dr. Kamal Hossain, has issued periodic reports that have noted serious abuses, but has not been granted permission to visit Taliban-controlled Afghanistan since 1999.

In undertaking an investigation of the Yakaolang and Robatak massacres, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should carefully avoid the shortcomings that characterized its 1999 Mazar-i Sharif investigation. It is vitally important that the work of the High Commissioner's Office and that of other United Nations agencies also address other violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Afghanistan by all parties, by significantly increasing its monitoring presence in Afghanistan.

Other intergovernmental organizations can also play an important role in ensuring that the warring parties in Afghanistan uphold international humanitarian law and human rights. In its Common Position on Afghanistan, adopted on January 24, 2000, the Council of the European Union stated that the objectives of the E.U. were, among others, to “promote respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, including the rights of women and children.”<sup>29</sup> The arbitrary detention and summary execution of civilians documented in this report, and the attendant population displacement, represent a challenge to the principles articulated in the Common Position, and merit an affirmative response on the part of the European Union. E.U. members should obtain information about human rights and humanitarian law violations in Afghanistan through coordinated initiatives by E.U. member states' embassies in neighboring countries where they can have direct contact with refugees.

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**YAKAOLANG – PARTIAL LIST OF PERSONS KILLED**

<b>PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>FATHER'S NAME</b>
AKHUNDAN	Ali	Sayyid Jawad
AKHUNDAN	Asadullah	Shah Meila
AKHUNDAN	Hamid	Shah Hussain
AKHUNDAN	Sayyid Ahmad	Danish
AKHUNDAN	Sayyid Yakub	Danish
AKHUNDAN	Sayyid Baqir	Sayyid Ibrahim
AKHUNDAN	Sayyid Musa	Ghulam Hussain
AKHUNDAN	Sayyid Qasim	Ghulam Hussain
AKHUNDAN	Sayyid Sarwar	Sayyid Ahmad Shah
AKHUNDAN	Sayyid Shah	Sayyid Ahmad Shah
AKHUNDAN	Taqi	n/a
BED MUSHKIN	Abdullah	Shah Sikandar
BED MUSHKIN	Ahmad Shah	Shah Sikandar
BED MUSHKIN	elder brother of Ahmad Shah	Shah Sikandar
BED MUSHKIN	Ghulam Hassan	n/a
BED MUSHKIN	Mamur Qasim	n/a
BED MUSHKIN	brother of Mamur Qasim	n/a
BED MUSHKIN	son of Mamur Qasim	Mamur Qasim
BED MUSHKIN	Sayyid Abdullah	Tawildar
BED MUSHKIN	Sayyid Akbar Asghari	n/a
BED MUSHKIN	brother of Sayyid Akbar Asghari	n/a
BED MUSHKIN	Sayyid Mohammad	n/a
BED MUSHKIN	son of Sayyid Mohammad	Sayyid Mohammad
BED MUSHKIN	Sayyid Mohsin	na
BED MUSHKIN	Shah Baqir	n/a
BED MUSHKIN	son of Shah Baqir	Shah Baqir
BED MUSHKIN	Shah Zafar	n/a
BED MUSHKIN	son of Shah Zafar	Shah Zafar
BED MUSHKIN	brother of Shah Zafar	n/a
BED MUSHKIN	brother of Sayyid Asadullah	Shah Ismail
BED MUSHKIN	son of Sayyid Tabar	Sayyid Tabar
BED MUSHKIN	worker of Akbar Khan Moalim	n/a
BEHSUD	Eid Mohammad	n/a
BOOM	Ali Zaffar	Shah Ali Akbar Haji
BOOM	Sayyid Mohammad	Shah Ali Akbar Haji
BOOM	n/a	Sayyid Mohammad
BOOM	friend of son of Sayyid Mohammad	
CHASMA SHIRIN	Sayyid Rasool (Mochi)	n/a
DAI NAU	Mohammad Ali Irfani	n/a
DIWALAK	Chaman	Ishaq
FEROZ BAHAR	Ali	Daoud Khan Moalim

FEROZ BAHAR	Karaman	Sayyid Shah
FEROZ BAHAR	Khaliq	Haji Eidullah
FEROZ BAHAR	Najib	Habib
GARDANAK	Qurbani	Ali Akbar
GUMBAZI	Akbar	Riza
GUMBAZI	Mohammad	Jaffar
GUMBAZI	Sayyid Ali	Sayyid Kalbi Hussain
GUMBAZI	Sayyid Mohammad Ali	Sayyid Haider
JAMAK	Hassan	M. Ali
JAMAK	brother of Hassan	M. Ali
JAMAK	Hussain Ali Lali	Khudadad (Rayl-a-ro)
JAMAK	Ibrahim Zohar	Haider Qarbalai
JAMAK	Nabi	Hussain Bux
JAMAK	Mohammad	Nabi
JAMAK	brother of Mohammad	Nabi
JAMAK	Mohammad Ali	Jaffar
JAMAK	Sayyid Ahmad Shah	Sayyid Iqbal
JAMAK	Sayyid Hassan Alawi	Sayyid M. Shah
JAMAK	Sayyid Mohammad e Payman	Sayyid Ali Akbar Shah
JAMAK	Shah Iqbal	Sayyid Mohammad
JAMAK	Sher Mohammad	M. Hussain Zohar
KARYA KUSHKAK	Amin	Sayyid Musa
KARYA KUSHKAK	Ghulam Hussain	Haji Yakub
KARYA KUSHKAK	Hassan	Sayyid Habib
KARYA KUSHKAK	Ibrahim	Haji Yakub
KARYA KUSHKAK	Sayyid Afzal	Sayyid Ghulam Hassan
KARYA KUSHKAK	brother of Sayyid Afzal	Sayyid Ghulam Hassan
KARYA KUSHKAK	brother of Sayyid Afzal	Sayyid Ghulam Hassan
KARYA KUSHKAK	Sayyid Daoud	Shah Qasim
KARYA KUSHKAK	Sayyid Sarwar	Sayyid Ishak
KARYA KUSHKAK	Sayyid Talib	Sayyid Ishak
KATA KHANA	Ayub	Shah Mirza
KATA KHANA	Nasir	Shah Mirza
KATA KHANA	Daoud Jamhoori	n/a

## Chapter 4

### **THE TALIBAN AND THE HAZARAS** by Michael Sample.

They issued me the last ticket to see the great buddha.

Then they collected the stubs and the visitor's book and bundled them into the sacks of documents to be buried. The remaining staff of the department for preservation of historical monuments had orders to hide even some things as innocuous as the books that recorded the impressions of visitors from six continents about the monuments of Bamian. A potato patch will be the resting place for the archives documenting 20 years of war.

I was pleased to have a chance to wander round the Buddhas again. The rock cut Buddhas of Bamyān are cultural sites of great significance, and were once the center of Afghanistan's mass tourist trade. In historical times, these Buddhas were targeted by Zealots. Their survival through the two decades of war is amazing.

Once again, there is fear that zealous conquerors might just try to prove their anti-idolatry credentials by further destroying them.

At night there was an air of the day of judgment in Bamyān, tried to guess how long it would be before the Taliban arrived. the sound of haunting nocturnal congregational prayers carried across the valley.

The faithful feared that the Taliban would wreak revenge for 20 years of defiance and for their share of casualties in previous Hazara Pashtoon fighting. this fighting had seen some of the civil war's bitterest encounters, and the local prayed for deliverance.

The threat to the Bamyān Buddhas is symbolic of the one hanging over much of the population central Afghanistan.

I emptied my camera reel and headed for the security of Islamabad. My host, the head of the department for preservation of historical monuments, was busy closing up his office, loading his *gelims* (the famous rough woven Afghani rugs) and a few personal belongings in to his jeep. he had done what he could to preserve central Afghanistan's share of the world's heritage. It was now time for Haji sahib to return to his wife to share the agonising worry at the disappearance of their son, a lecturer in journalism at the university of Balkh in Mazar-I-Sharif, which had been over run by the Taliban a week before. Haji sahib's agony is shared by thousands of families, who fear that relatives in Mazar-I-Sharif may face a slaughter.

As the Taliban close in the statelet of the Hazaras, built up in central Afghanistan over the past 20 years, totters on the brink of collapse.

**TANG AMAD, DAR JANG AMAD**

Bamian town lies at the center of Afghanistan vast, mountainous Hazarajat region. It covers about 100000 SQ KM and is home to the Hazara tribe, which claims anything between 1.5 and 4 million people.

The Hazaras were prominent in the northern alliance that has been battling the Pashtoon dominated Taliban of the south. The alliance has been plagued by factional fighting and misrule and collapsed militarily in the face of string of Taliban victories in July and August. Iran has been supporting the northern alliance and considers it self a natural ally of the Shia Hazaras, but Iran has been reluctant to commit the scale of assistance that might alter the turn of events. The rapid development of the last few months left Hazarajat, with the pockets controlled by Ahmed Shah Masood in the north east. Alone in resisting the drive of the Taliban to conquer all of Afghanistan. The region is already crippled by an economic blockade which has led to near-famine conditions.

The Taliban capture of Mazar-I-Sharif in August had meant that Hazarajat was surrounded. It put the Taliban in control of the last remaining supply routes to the mountains and in a position to impose further hunger. The poorest of the area had survived by eating wild rhubarb, selling of their animals and entering into debt. A continued blockade meant they could not buy food to tide them over the upcoming winter. The starvation could only get worse.

In the face of such overwhelming odds, the natural thing to do would have been to surrender. Personally, I had expected a rapid surrender once the fate of Mazar-I-Sharif was decided, and had hoped that this would at least serve to quickly bring down the price of grain. The Hazaras sense of desperation, however, is summed up in their proverb: *tang amad dar jang amad* (he who is cornered must fight).

What must have made Hazarajat contemplate such defiance?

If the Taliban achieve a military victory in central Afghanistan, and if the Hazaras' main party, the Hizb-e-Wahdat, melts away in front of them (as Afghan groups often do when confronted by certain defeat) then it will signal the end of a 20 year experiment in de facto regional autonomy. Whether the ultimate outcome is restoration of order and national integration (the optimistic view at times communicated by the Taliban) or a new phase of civil strife (the catastrophic view espoused by the many of the Hazaras in Bamyan). The restoration of rule by Kabul in this part of Afghanistan will be a major historical significance.

Often the long period of civil war in Afghanistan has been depicted as a period of anarchy. This has hardly been the case in central Afghanistan. There have been three phases to the conflict here. In the 1978-1983 period (immediately after the communist coup in Kabul and the subsequent Soviet intervention), popular local uprisings rapidly forced the communist Government to abandon all District headquarters and retreat to the regional headquarters in Bamyan. Meanwhile a new Hazara political movement, Shura Ittifaq, emerged in the wake of the uprisings. It was headed by Agha Behishti of Waras and backed by the traditional religious leadership of the area.

The Shura was remarkably successful in quickly establishing a presence through Hazarajat and putting itself forward as the new regional government. However, during the 1983-1989 period as the US and Pakistan, on the one hand, and Iran, on the other, poured money into the anti Soviet *jihad*, there was a proliferation of armed groups operating in Hazarajat. They challenged the Shura Ittifaq's hegemony and a bitter civil war ensued that is still remembered in Bamyan as the bloodiest phase of the conflict. The third phase (1989-1998) came as Iran put its authority behind a merger of the Hazara military and political groups under the banner of Hizb-e-Wahdat (party of unity). Wahdat was able to take over the autonomy project that Shura had started.

After securing military and political allegiance of the numerous groups operating in the vast territory, Wahdat set about developing its regional government. It established district and regional level council, with specialist departments for justice, security, communications, commerce, women affairs, social welfare, health and education. When a coalition of mujahideen groups finally pushed the central forces of Najibullah out of Bamyan, Wahdat built the headquarters for its regional government here, fast by the standing Buddahs.

Although the early popular risings had often targeted primary schools for their association with the communists, the expansion of access education was an important part of the .

Official education departments were established at the district level and they began to reactivate old schools and open new ones, depending on the resources raised, primarily from local taxation. The Hazaras had a strong sense that lack of access to education was what had previously left them politically marginalised and fit only to be porters in the Kabul markets. Education was part of the national revive that was planned.

In contrast to the Taliban areas, there was a significant expansion of female education under the Wahdat, helped in part by the recruitment of teachers from the refugees returning Iran and from the educated Hazaras displaced from Kabul. Although the main focus was primary education, Wahdat also setup a university in Bamyan, until September, a team of lecturers from Balkh university was working on secondment at Bamyan's fledgling university.

Another practical task for the regional administration was to service the region's infrastructure, conscripting thousands of men every spring to reopen the roads after the snow melt.

New routes were developed, in particular the road to Mazar-I-Sharif which traverses through one of the world highest altitudes and most inhospitable terrains.

The regional government was also busy developing landing strips, and levelling a mountain top plateau as an international airport.

The department for preservation of historical monuments was part of this forward looking agenda of the Bamyan government, a recognition that Hazarajat had numerous heritage sites of international significance.

Alongside the building up of regional civilians institutions, Wahdat also began developing its war machine. initially, it was composed of a patchwork of local commanders who had emerged over the years fighting other communities of Afghanistan and the communists. since the fall of Najibullah government, Wahdat gradually tried to fashion a conventional army, with commanders receiving commissions from the movement's leadership and conscripts from the districts. however, the army remained poor in resources, weak in command and control, and lacking in professional officers of proven quality. It would be safe to say that what victories it achieved were probably due more to desperation than military effectiveness or discipline.

## **HAZARAS VS KOCHI**

Under lining the Hazaras regional autonomy project was a long history of conflict in the areas. Hazaras, thrown in to a state of urgent activity by the news of Taliban advances northwards, were mindful not just of the track record of the Taliban movement itself but also of the (ethnic pashtoon) conquerors that had come long before. Hazarajat was only fully assimilated into



Afghanistan in the 1890s by Kabul's Amir Abdur Rehman in a series of military campaigns. Hazara resistance to this integration was ruthlessly put down, and folklore abounds with tales of towers of skulls erected by the victorious Amir. After the fighting was over hundreds of members of the Hazara ruling castes, the *mirs* and the *syeds* were picked up by the Kabul forces and disappeared.

Following the annexation much of the fertile valley land at the base of the mountainous region was confiscated in favour of the Pashtoon tribes.

Most significantly, in 1894, Abdur Rehman issued an edict granting rights over the pasture lands in the region to the Pashtoon nomad tribe, the Kochis, who had helped the Amir to conquer the area. For 90 years the Kochis exercised these rights in their annual migration.

If there is sectarian bitterness in Hazarajat, it is largely directed at the Kochis. In a classic case of agricultural pastoralist rivalry, the Kochis are remembered for terrorising the peasants (backed by the Pashtoon administration), for strong arm tactics in petty trade and money lending, and for forcibly acquiring land.

Ultimately some of them set themselves up as landlords and their Pashtoon style mud fortresses, now in ruins, still dot the Hazarajat countryside.

The reality of the civil war in Hazarajat is that it was directed against communism only momentarily. The Hazaras' first and most significant acts in their autonomy project were to bar entry to the nomads, restore the arable land that they had bought or grabbed, and repeal the edicts of Abdur Rehman and Sardar Mohammed Daoud (President of Afghanistan 1973-78) granting the Kochis control of the rangelands. For 20 years therefore, the Hazaras have controlled these natural resources. The panic in Hazarajat now is the fear that history will repeat itself and that the Taliban advance means nothing more than a Pashtoon reconquest.

The Hazaras fully expect their region to be pillaged in the days ahead, as during the conquest by Abdur Rehman.

The mood was summed up by one of the hoteliers I met in Bamyan (yes Hazarajat has its share of roadside *chai khana* managed by enterprising women returned from Iran and Kabul).

She roars defiance, claims to have killed eight looters in the war for west of Kabul, and promises to again shoulder her Kalashnikov if the old rulers try to return.

Elsewhere, people were immersed in deep depression at the prospect of becoming serfs again. In Pusht-e-Ghorey, former tenants now graze their animals on pastures once reserved for the Kochis, and they are now able to plant rainfed wheat and barley on the hillside. They point to a single decaying wall, all that is left of their old lord's fort, and tremble at the thought of how they will be punished for their audacity.

In Waras, despairing tenants of one of the big Pashtoon landlords contemplate what their returning master would demand in lieu of 20 years' of back rent.

In Panjao, I met Sohaila a woman educated in Kabul who as a literacy instructor, is the only earning member of two families.

Her work at an NGO winter school last year saved her relation from starvation. She is terrified that the United Nations will be forced to abandon the education project for she now works. But most impressive is Haji Sahib himself. He discreetly lets it be known that he has little hope of surviving a Taliban purge.

But he repeatedly quotes Arnold Toynbee and laments that the coming changes defy "the spirit of people" he warns that peace can not be achieved in this way. Military pacification, which does not address the old enmities underlying the struggle for the resources of the mountain, can not be the way to enduring peace. It is striking that the international assistance group, which is July

decided to make Hazrajat a show piece for the united nations' new "common programming" approach, could do nothing to allay the civilian populations fear of an impending massacre. All international staff from the UN and most of the NGO's plus most of the national staff, were pulled out of the area at the first sign of the Taliban advance. The Bin Ladin affairs has made them even more cautious about returning. The agencies concern to take no risk with their own staff security means that are unable to play the kind of witness role that many in the civilian population expected them to. The international aid agencies are confined to a peripheral role while the hazaras take their chances with their new rulers.

### **HAZARAJAT UP DATE: 21 SEPTEMBER.**

On 13 September, just over a month after the capture of Mazar-I-Sharif and the UN "last flight" out of Bamyán town the Taliban announced that they had captured Hazarajat regional headquarters, advancing from the north. While the Hizb-e-Wahdat forces retreated into the mountains, the Taliban continued their push through the region, establishing themselves along main routs and linking up with their forces on the eastern borders of Hazarjat in order to rule out any contact between Wahdat and remnants of the opposition near Kabul. The Taliban set about establishing a new administration in Bamyán and the other conquered districts.

Wahdat was left dreaming of the deus ex machina of an Iranian invasion, and wondering wheater it has the stomach for guerilla war. The 20 years of autonomy are at an end.

In Hazarajat, the population has little option but the to bow their heads and accommodate to the new administration.

History and recent experience give them every reason to be terrified. The last time the a pashtoon dominated army subdued Hazarajat a hundred years ago, the victory was followed by dreadful reprisals and a compaign of subjugation.

This time round, both amnesty international and the united nation high commissioner for refugees have released report saying that they have collected extensive evidence of the killing of thousands of civilians after the battle for Mazar-I-Sharif.

It is entirely likely that the Mazar-iSharif massacre could be repeated in Bamyán and the surrounding region, or even quieter, more discriminating, disappearances of people associated with toppled local regime may take place. Once again, the international agencies, unwilling to be present on the ground in Hazarajat during the perilous transition (despite the Taliban Public invitations), have marginalised themselves by removing themselves. Would a Bosnian population have been abandoned in the same way?

## **Chapter 5**

### **Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions expresses concern over situation in Afghanistan**

#### **Asma Jahangir's Report.**

The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Asma Jahangir, today expressed deep concern over continuing reports of massacres and extrajudicial executions in Afghanistan.

Ms. Jahangir said she had received reports indicating that, in the last month, between 100 and 300 people, including at least one child and a number of humanitarian workers, have been killed

by Taliban forces in connection with the recapture of Yakawolang in the Hazarajat region. It is alleged that foreign elements may have been involved in these actions.

Reports further suggest that a large number of civilians were summarily executed in Yakawolang as a form of collective punishment for their alleged opposition to the Taliban. At least two mass-grave sites have allegedly been identified by the local population.

According to information received, the Special Rapporteur continued, at least six prisoners have been executed after summary trials in the province of Panjshir by forces controlled by Ahmad Shah Masood. It is alleged that some of these persons had been tortured before being executed.

Recalling that in the last two years there have been a series of large-scale killings in Afghanistan, Ms. Jahangir said such atrocities required the immediate attention of the international community. She called on the parties involved to put an immediate end to extrajudicial killings, and allow access to the international media and human rights investigators into Afghanistan. All cases of alleged extrajudicial killings must be investigated with a view to bringing the perpetrators of such abuses to justice, she concluded.

### ***A RAWA member reports from the massacre by the Taliban in Yakaolang***

*RAWA, Feb.8, 2001*

On returning from the sub-province of Yakaolang (Bamiyan, central Afghanistan) a member of RAWA has submitted this report. Her father and uncle lost their lives in the horrible fighting between the Taliban and the Khalili forces.

On 14 December 2000 at midnight, while the oppressed and pain-wracked people of the sub-province of Yukaolang were engaged in the battle with cold weather, as well as the constant struggle against poverty and starvation, the forces of Karim Khalili and Qurbanali Arfani attacked using guerrilla warfare. This resulted in Taliban fatalities as well as the deaths of many innocent villagers.

At 4AM, the Taliban forces retreated and the armed men of Khalili began systematically looting and pillaging the property of the villagers, under the pretext of conducting an investigation. This went on for seven days.

Among the plundered property:

- the store of Haji Yar Muhammad of Tajik nationality,
- Baz Muhammd of Tajik nationality,

- Dawad Karbalaie of Hazara nationality,
- the shop of Haji Abdul Gafoor,
- the house of Ibrahim son of Ali Zafar,
- the house of Muhammad Ali son of Sayad Ali,
- the radio repair shop of Sayid Ahmad from the village of Bida Muskin.

After the theft and robbery, the Taliban Khalili (is it the taliban or khalili?) dragged people out of their homes and shot them dead. Among the people who lost their lives were

- Haji Yaqub,
- Haji Ishaq,
- Sayed Sarwar,
- and an engineer Syed Dawad with his four children.

From the village of Akhundand,

- Muhammad Mosa, son of Khuday Nazar,
- Marheez, son of Sher Muhammad,
- Ahmad, son of Iqbal
- about seventeen children were murdered.

In the village of Khata Khana a number of innocent people took shelter in a mosque, hoping that the fear of Allah would protect them from the Taliban, to no avail. Immediately upon seizing control of the area, the Taliban fired rockets at the mosque leaving seventy people dead. Most of them were children and old people who were covered by the walls of the mosque and left there, dead for many days, becoming the meal of wild beasts. But the men of the Taliban were not satisfied. They burnt any remaining people's houses, and then bulldozed them. They also set on fire stockpiles of wheat and animal fodder.

In the village of Quraan the armed men of the Taliban shot a number of small children to death. So unsatiated was the bloodlust of the Taliban, that they killed three peasants by the name of Rajab, Khadim and Hameed in a single house.

After their defeat, the retreating gunmen of Khalili robbed houses they passed. This is why people left their homes, turned to Pakistan and Iran and joined the line of new refugees.

### ***UN calls for end to hostilities in Afghanistan***

"Both conflicting parties showed utter disregard for the well-being of the civilian population."

*The News, February 8, 2001*

ISLAMABAD: UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan Kamal Hossain has appealed to Taliban Supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar and ousted Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani to refrain from resumption of hostilities.

In his letters addressed to both the sides, he also urged for immediate investigations to identify those responsible for grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

He said: "I am extremely concerned about the reports that are now coming out of Yakawlang district in Hazarajat. I have received numerous accounts of civilians being deliberately attacked and killed and subjected to gross and systematic violations of their human rights."

It is reported that in December 2000, the forces of the Northern Alliance captured Yakawlang which was subsequently recaptured by the Taliban militia in the first week of January.

In the course of this offensive, it was reported that both conflicting parties showed utter disregard for the well-being of the civilian population.

A former Bangladeshi foreign minister Kamal Hossain said: "The civilian population, I am informed from independent and reliable sources, did not participate in the armed hostilities and remained in their villages. However, it appears that the Taliban forces engaged in widespread summary executions and arbitrarily detained hundreds of civilians who are still unaccounted for."

A United Nations staff member is still missing and it is reported that local humanitarian personnel are among those killed. It is also

reported that the alliance forces occupied a hospital and Leprosy Centre that was subsequently attacked by the Taliban troops.

Kamal Hossain said: "I would earnestly appeal to both sides to refrain from resumption of armed conflict. I would also urge that immediate investigations be undertaken to identify those responsible for grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Such violations give rise to international criminal responsibility."

The special rapporteur said: "I would like to visit the area and gather relevant information so that fact can be determined and appropriate action taken. In the meantime, I would appreciate receiving any information that the Taliban authorities could provide about the above-reported occurrences and measures taken to ensure that the right to life and the right not to be subjected to summary execution and arbitrary detention are protected." NNI

### ***Rights group accuses Taliban of mass killings***

*UPI, Feb.19, 2001*

WASHINGTON, Feb. 19 (UPI) -- Fighters in the Taliban militia have killed more than 300 civilians in Afghanistan over the past year, including a massacre in January of members of the Hazara religious minority, the advocacy group Human Rights Watch charged in a report issued Monday.

The report cites witnesses as saying the Taliban committed two massacres -- last May, and Jan. 8-11 in the central highlands of the country. The Taliban, which strictly enforces its own form of Islamic fundamentalism, holds all of Afghanistan except for a small area in the north. Fighting in recent days has shifted control of two north-central cities between the Taliban and its opposition, causing heavy casualties that prompted the United Nations to urge an investigation of reported civilian deaths.

The majority of victims in both attacks were members of the Hazaras, a Shiite Muslim sect based mainly in the highlands of Northern and central Afghanistan. The Taliban, which is made up of Sunni Muslims, accuses the Hazaras of collaboration with Shiite-majority Iran and the United Front. The front, formerly known as the Northern Alliance, has been fighting the Taliban's

nearly five-year sweep through most of the country. The opposition controls the northeastern province of Badakhshan, on the border with Tajikistan, and the Panjshir Valley.

According to Human Rights Watch, on Jan. 8 the Taliban retook Yakaolang district in the northern Afghan province of Bamian, a key part of the Hazarajat region -- where the Hazaras are in the majority -- from two groups of Hazaras in the United Front. About 300 civilians, all men, including members of humanitarian groups, were rounded up and shot to death in various public areas, the report said, citing witnesses' accounts and "other corroborating evidence," including photographs.

Last May, according to the report, 31 bodies were found near a mountain pass on the border between the provinces of Baghlan and Samangan, where Hazaras are in the majority as well. Of the dead, 26 were identified as civilians, the human rights group said; all 26 had been jailed for four months, and some were tortured, it added.

Workers buried 29 bodies of victims of the May attack at a single site. One of the workers was quoted in the Human Rights Watch report as saying: "The bodies were lying on the ground face-down. All of their hands were bound behind their backs....The bullet wounds could not be made out on the backs, but there was blood on the ground beneath (their) chests....They were tied together in groups of three using their turbans, and scarves that had been wound together to make ropes. They were tied together, one to the other, using their own turbans.

"To tell you the truth, we were so terrified and upset that we barely dared look at the ground. You could hardly stand there," the witness reportedly said.

On Friday at the United Nations, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he was concerned over reports that "civilians were deliberately targeted" by the Taliban recently in Yakaolang.

"It appears more than 100 people may have been killed, including humanitarian workers," Annan said in a statement. The reports "require prompt investigation, and that those responsible be brought to justice," he added.

A member of the local U.N. staff in central Afghanistan is still missing.

The U.N. undersecretary for humanitarian affairs, Kenzo Oshima, called for \$230 million in immediate international aid for the more than 1 million Afghans who have been displaced by the war and drought, and who are facing sub-freezing temperatures this winter.

Last week Oshima visited the Afghan capital, Kabul, and the cities of Feyzabad and Heart, saying that in separate talks with Taliban leaders and the United Front he urged an end to the fighting.

Since the Taliban retook the areas from the Hazara-led factions -- which had captured them on Dec. 20 -- "there have been numerous credible reports of widespread summary executions of Hazara civilians by the Taliban," Annan said.

Taliban soldiers took the city of Bamian after heavy fighting Saturday, three days after they had been pushed back by the United Front. Bamian is a key route for the Taliban to the few Northern provinces it controls.

UN human rights commissioner Mary Robinson on Friday built on Annan's suggestion by calling for an international probe into the massacres to begin immediately, "before additional loss of life occurs."

Human Rights Watch, like other international groups that monitor human rights in Afghanistan, has criticized the United Front for atrocities committed during the civil war. In its latest report, "Massacres of Hazaras in Afghanistan," the group said that the international community focuses on support for the Taliban abroad, but should instead look into acts of brutality committed within Afghanistan.

### ***Taliban accused of mass killing***

***BBC News, Feb.19, 2001***

*By Afghanistan correspondent Kate Clark*

Human Rights Watch has released a report detailing the mass killing of civilians by Taleban troops in central Afghanistan last month.



The United Nations first made the allegations that about 170 men and teenage boys were killed in Yakawlang after the Taleban briefly lost and then recaptured the district from the opposition.

The Taleban have denied the reports but stopped journalists visiting the area.

Now Human Rights Watch has released film with graphic evidence of the killings.

The organisation interviewed more than 30 people from Yakawlang who say the Taleban troops rounded up men from the bazaar and nearby villages after they recaptured the district from the opposition.

### **Mass grave**

Many of the men were forced to march to Yakawlang centre where, interviewees say, they were bayoneted or shot outside the office of the British charity Oxfam.

Relatives say the bodies were left stacked like firewood. There is also footage of what Human Rights Watch say is a mass grave in Bedmishkin village.

Some of the corpses still have their hands tied behind their backs. Most have been shot but one has been skinned.

Villagers say it is the body of Mir Ali, a 17-year-old boy. The interviewees are shocked and bewildered.

Anyone affiliated to the opposition had already fled the area. Those who stayed expected the Taleban to treat them humanely.

But people say a delegation from Bedmishkin village carrying a Taleban flag and trying to mediate was among those killed.

They say the secretary of the former Taleban military governor was also shot, as well as Afghan aid workers.

### **Islamic law**

The interviewees believe their only crime was to be from the same ethnic group as the opposition. The Taleban have denied the killings, calling the allegations enemy propaganda. They say it is impossible they could have carried out an action so contrary to Islamic law.

But the weight of this evidence is compelling.

This is not the first time civilians have been targeted during the 20-year-old civil war. But the Taleban have always claimed to be different - a holy movement with a mission to save Afghanistan from lawlessness.

There are allegations of five similar killings by the Taleban in the past 18 months. Human Rights Watch says those who ordered the killings must now be brought to justice.

### **Reign of terror against Hazaras in Herat by Taliban**

In mid May 1999, Taliban after suppression of a pre-empting Iran-backed coup by Hezb-e-Wahdat (lackeys of Iran) in Herat, started a purge against the Shiites. The Taliban armed forces carrying out house to house search and arrest of Shiite minority civilians. According to recent news from RAWA supporters in Herat, hundreds of Hazaras Shiites have been imprisoned and dozens of them have been publicly executed by the Taliban.

# Chapter 6

## TALIBAN MEMBERS

In no way is this complete list of all the members of the Taliban. This is only a list of some of their officials compiled from various news sources. If you know someone who is not mentioned here, please let us know. Please remember that even though they have given themselves the titles listed below, the Taliban have not been recognized as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. The World Community still sees the Islamic State of Afghanistan, led by President Rabbani as the legitimate government in Afghanistan today. It is widely believed that some of the names mentioned below may not be real. Many Former communist officials who joined the Taliban picked up false names in order to hide their identities. This information is accurate as of January 28th, 1997.

### Officials

Leader Mullah Mohammad Omar Head of Kabul Council  
 second in charge Mullah Mohammad Rabbani Political leader in Logar  
 possibly 3rd in charge Mullah Mohammed Ghaus Administrator of captured provinces Mullah Ehsanullah Talib Gov. of Kandahar Mullah Mohammad Hassan Talib Gov. of Heart Mullah Yar Mohammad Talib. Gov. of Paktia province Mullah Karamatullah Talib. Gov. of Paktia Mullah Shamshuddin Foreign Minister Mullah Sher Mohammad Stanakzai Head of Central Bank Mullah Ihsanullah Ihsan Information Minister Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi Head of Security Mullah Fazel Ahmad Akhond UN rep appointee  
 (not recognized by the world community) Hamid Karzai Minister of Planning Qari Din Mohammad Acting Deputy Minister of Planning Mullah Isatullah Minister of Refugee Repatriation Mullah Abdul Raqib Acting Deputy of Labor and Social Affairs Mullah Abdul Salaam Acting Minister of Martyrs and Disabled Mullah Abdul Bakh Acting Minister of Urban Reconstruction Mullah Mohammed Rustan

### Field Commanders of the Taliban

Ghulam Mohammad Mullah Mohammad Zahir  
 (Commander of the 4th Armoured Division) Mullah Haqani Mullah Hamidullah

### Talib Spokesmen

Maulvi Haqqani Mullah Mohammed Abbas Eid Mohammad Wahadyar

### **Who is Mullah Mohammad Omar?**

Mullah Mohammad Omar is the leader of the Taliban militia which sprang out of Kandahar in 1994. He is considered to be one of the most mysterious figures in Afghan politics today. Followers of the Taliban claim that Mullah Omar was born in the central province of Uruzgan in 1962. They also say that he studied in several Islamic schools outside of Afghanistan (Quetta, Pakistan) before joining the Jihad against the Russian occupation in the 1980s.

Those who claim that they have seen Mullah Omar describe him as a determined man with one eye. Mullah Omar lost his other eye fighting the Soviets as a deputy Chief Commander in the Harakat-i-Inqilab-i Islami party of Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi.

The story in Kandahar is that Mullah Omar had a dream in which the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) appeared to him and told him to bring peace to Afghanistan (US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, 3-6-95). Mullah Omar then gathered men together to fight against Rabbani's government. In reality this story is probably more myth than history.

Evidence shows that Mullah Omar is most likely a nominal figure trained and controlled by Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI. People opposed to Mullah Omar cry out that he is not even a Mullah. They claim that he is an illiterate and that he knows nothing about Islam. His opposers argue that Mullah Omar has made many mistakes when it comes to Islamic law. For example, Mullah Omar stated that the use of opium is wrong, but the selling of it is not wrong according to Islamic law. In reality, Islam forbids both the use and selling of any type of illegal drugs, including opium.

On April 3rd, 1996, about 1,000 so-called Muslim clergymen chose Mullah Omar as "Amirul-Mumineen" (Supreme Leader of the Muslims). They branded President Burhanuddin Rabbani, a former Mujahideen leader who valiantly fought against Soviet Occupation, as a criminal!

It is extremely difficult to present information about Mullah Omar, since he refuses to speak to journalists directly.

### **Taliban and the Opium Connection**

Superficially, the Taliban present themselves as true Muslim citizens by banning smoking, gambling and drinking. In reality, the Taliban are nothing more than hypocrites. Not only do they grow opium to finance their war, but they collect a large tax from civilian farmers who grow them for other reasons.

Production of opium in Afghanistan reached 400 tonnes last year. Helmand and Nangarhar are major opium production areas of Afghanistan, and they are in full control of the Taliban. The opium produced in Afghanistan is refined into heroin in laboratories located in Pakistan. In fact, all the areas in Afghanistan that grow opium are controlled by the Taliban who were created by

the Interior Minister of Pakistan for several reasons, including to open a trade route for Pakistan to Central Asia.

Many of the Taliban are involved in this criminal trade. They include Haji Abdur Rahman Bakwalii from Nimroz, Mestiri Amrullah Helmandi, alias Mestiri Talib, Mullah Abdur Rahim Helmandi, Haji Bismillah Helmandi and Lal Mohammad, who serves as the Taliban commander in Nimroz province.

Mullah Yarana, a main Taliban official, lives in the Pakistani border town of Chaman and is involved in processing and smuggling heroin to the United States and Europe through Iran and Turkmenistan. Mullah Yarana's headquarters is basically a den of drug smugglers.

When confronted with this issue, the Taliban claim that only the use of opium is unlawful in Islam and that the selling of it is valid. The truth is that Islam forbids both the use, and selling of opium as well as other harmful drugs!

The ousted government led by President Rabbani prohibited the production, trade, and smuggling of opium and other drugs.

Many western new sources have reported this hypocrisy of the Taliban, including the London Telegraph, and Reuters.

## **FRIENDS OF THE TALIBAN**

### **AS FIGHTING NEARS KABUL, TWO POWS TELL TIME THAT PAKISTAN SENT SOLDIERS TO HELP THE EXTREME ISLAMISTS**

#### **EDWARD BARNES/PANJSHIR VALLEY**

The 26 men sit in grim isolation, huddled in a darkened cell of a former Soviet-built prison deep in northern Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley. They are sequestered from nearly 600 other prisoners, but even if they were allowed to mingle, they would still stand apart. The style of their clothes, the color of their skin, their very language mark them as outsiders. They are not Afghans. They are Pakistanis, captured while fighting against the forces of the Afghan government that was driven from the capital five weeks ago by the group of Islamic fighters known as the Taliban. The presence of these foreign supporters of the Taliban, claim officials at the prison, is hard proof that Pakistan, a U.S. ally, has arrogated for itself a more extensive role in Afghanistan's war than has ever been acknowledged.

Even before the Taliban's victorious drive on Kabul, the ousted government had long insisted that the student-led band of Muslim warriors were actively backed by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) and by some members of the country's powerful military. The motive: gaining some influence over a neighbor with whom it shares a long and exceedingly porous border. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has denied any involvement, but in late September, Naseerullah Babar, Pakistan's Interior Minister, flew to Afghanistan to work out a settlement between the Taliban and the most powerful of the Afghan warlords. While that seemed to

support suspicions, the stories told by several of the prisoners in the Panjshir, if true, would constitute the first direct evidence that Islamabad's involvement with the war-riven nation to the west extends to recruiting Pakistanis and paying them to fight alongside the Taliban.

Khalid Mohammed Zai, 22, was a member of an Islamic paramilitary unit, based in Kulty Chawni in Pakistan's Punjab province. He says his unit was under the control of the ISI, and his mission, as it was explained to him and 1,000 other Pakistani fighters he says entered Afghanistan during the past two months, was to "go as a fighter and rise to a high position of influence." He was transported across the border by Pakistani military vehicles and, once in Kabul, received orders and money from the senior Pakistani officer in Kabul, a man named Naser. Zai was in the forefront of the Taliban troops who swept into Kabul on Sept. 27 and pushed the armies of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the former government's army commander, into the hills surrounding the capital. Zai was captured Oct. 13 near the Salang Pass, the high-water mark of the Taliban effort to drive Massoud's forces from the region. The campaign turned disastrous when Massoud retreated until the Taliban had stretched their lines dangerously thin. Then the Lion of Panjshir turned and abruptly struck at their flanks, a tactic he had used many times against the Soviets.

The momentum of this counterattack carried Massoud's forces through the village of Charikar, where Mohammed Zahid Pashtun, 26, another Pakistani fighter, was stationed. A devout Muslim and former engineering student, Zahid says he signed up for combat duty with a Pakistani intelligence officer and was given 40 days of training. He eventually reached Charikar, where Afghan civilians, who initially welcomed the Taliban, revolted after just 11 days of repressive rule, outraged by a draconian regime that bars women from working outside the home. Also outlawed are movies, music and chess. Captured, he now says he regrets his role. "I heard and saw how the Taliban treated people. If I get home again, I will tell people that the Taliban are not true Islam."

While Massoud is eager to drive them out, the Taliban have sworn they will not leave Kabul. Massoud, an ethnic Tajik, is aided by the Taliban's plummeting popularity, but the key to his offensive is his tenuous alliance with Abdul Rashid Dostum, a powerful Uzbek warlord, who is with Massoud's forces battling the Taliban near Kabul. The tribal nature of the conflict has always complicated the fighting. Last week the Taliban, mostly ethnic Pashtun, were going house to house in Kabul in search of Tajiks and Uzbeks. Pakistan's meddling can only worsen the hostilities, and the lines of refugees will stretch deep into the winter.

*--With reporting by Meenakshi Ganguly/New Delhi and Lewis M. Simons/Washington*

*Source: TIME Magazine November 4, 1996 Volume 148, No. 21*

## **THE NOT SO HIDDEN HAND**

How Pakistanis help the Taliban crusade By Anthony Davis / Baharak

BACK IN THE DARK days of the mid-'80s, the village of Baharak in Afghanistan's northeastern Panjshir valley won fame far beyond its modest size as a major Soviet base. From its stony wheat fields, artillery and tanks pounded the surrounding mountains and the elusive mujahideen guerrillas they sheltered.

Today, Baharak once again plays host to foreigners who went to Afghanistan to fight. This time they are Pakistani. Since the fundamentalist Taliban swept the Burhannudin Rabbani regime from Kabul in September, fighting has spread from the capital, north to the mouth of the 100-km-long Panjshir. Last month the forces of Rabbani's military chief Ahmadshah Massoud counter-attacked and the war shifted back towards Kabul. Apart from the 350-plus who died or were wounded, more than 700 Taliban fighters were taken prisoner and locked up in the Panjshir. Among them are 37 men who concede that they are Pakistani citizens. "If you want proof that Pakistan is actively interfering in our country, go to Baharak," a Massoud aide told Asiaweek. "Talk to them. They will tell you."

Clad in a shalwar kameez and checkered head scarf, Hasan abu Hamid's sturdy build and dark complexion mark him as unmistakably Punjabi. As with several of his compatriots, Hasan's road to Afghanistan was smoothed by Jamiat Ulema Islami (JUI), a Pakistani religious party. Son of an alim, or religious scholar, Hasan studied under a local JUI leader named Maulewi Mahmoud. "He told us that in Afghanistan and Kashmir, shariah law was not being enforced and it was our duty to fight. After Afghanistan and Kashmir, we would ensure that shariah was properly enforced in Pakistan." Earlier this year, the 24-year-old underwent training in a camp in southeastern Afghanistan near the town of Khost. "There were about 40 of us in the group," says Hasan. "We were trained by a Pakistani man called Safiullah and two assistants in the use of small arms --pistols, rifles, rocket-propelled grenades."

Ultimately, Hasan's newfound military skill was of little use. In mid-October, he and six other Pakistanis operating with a force of some 60 Afghan Taliban were ambushed by Massoud's troops on the winding Salang Highway. "We were attacked from two sides as darkness fell," recalls the tall Punjabi. "We abandoned the armored vehicles and ran. We moved at night across the mountains and next morning came down and surrendered." Captured in the same group was 22-year-old Khalid, a Pakistani of ethnic Pushtan stock from Baluchistan. Having graduated from Koranic studies in southern Punjab, he went on to join a small militant faction, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen. He received military training for four months in a camp in Pakistan-run Azad Kashmir, for many years a springboard for volunteers eager to wage holy war in Indian Kashmir. Khalid was himself an instructor for two years until last August, when he was ordered to Afghanistan. The Panjshir POWs are clear proof of what has long been rumored --that several Pakistani religious parties, such as the JUI, are solidly behind the Taliban crusade and encouraging young Pakistani zealots to fight with them. It is also clear that Pakistan authorities know exactly what is going on; JUI leader Maulewi Fazlur Rahman was a member of Benazir Bhutto's ousted government. And Fazlur Rahman is known to have worked closely with former interior minister Maj.-Gen. (Retired) Naseerullah Babar, Bhutto's pointman on Afghanistan.

The former Kabul authorities have found it less easy to present clear evidence of the involvement of Pakistan's military intelligence. The Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), for years the sharp end of Pakistan's Afghan policy, also is believed to have helped the Taliban logistically

and advised them on strategy. Shortly before the fall of Kabul a Taliban military transport landed in Massoud-controlled territory. On board were five Pakistanis. Today they are being held in Panjshir under suspicion that they are ISI officers. The leader of the group, Omar Faruq, a gray-bearded man in his early 50s, insists that he is a religious teacher. His group, he says wearily, was merely visiting a shrine in Afghanistan and were the victims of a frame-up. But analysts are in little doubt that ISI has links with Pakistani religious parties that provide volunteers for jihad in both Kashmir and Afghanistan. "It is part of a privatization of an enterprise earlier run by the ISI for the Kashmir conflict," says a Western source. "Beyond that, these religious factions are sending youth to fight and the authorities have done nothing to stop it." That certainly gels with what the Panjshir POWs have to say. "When groups finished training for Kashmir," says Khalid, the former instructor, "ISI officers would issue them with weapons, ammunition and 2,000 rupees [\$50] a man."

*Source: Asiaweek*

**The Taliban Story:**  
**God's Holy Warriors or the Devil's Militia?**

The story of the Taliban is complicated, and just like every other story, there are two sides to it. When the members of the Taliban first revealed themselves, they gave the world the impression that they had come to rid Afghanistan of its problems. At first, even the ousted government of today, recognized the Taliban as a legitimate Afghan force that wanted to rid corruption and disorder. However, as time passed, the true nature of the Taliban was revealed. Soon, the Taliban became known as a militia that used a mixture of Kalashnikovs, false Islam, foreign money, and opium to get its way.

Who are these men of the Taliban? Where did they come from? What do they want to do with Afghanistan? These are but a few of the questions present in the minds of civilized people everywhere.

Members of the Taliban claim that they are students of Islam, and that all they want to do is to bring Afghanistan under Islamic rule. They claim that their movement began in September of 1994, in the southern Afghan province of Kandahar. At that time, they say Kandahar was plagued by groups that robbed, killed, and raped the populace. One man by the name of Mullah Mohammad Omar wanted to end these reprehensible acts, and so he started this reform movement.

As wonderful as this story might sound, the evidence points in the opposite direction. In reality, the Taliban is a military and political force trained and built by Pakistan. While it is true that the Taliban foot soldiers are young Afghans who studied in religious schools in Pakistan during the Soviet war, the higher officials of the Taliban are made up of former communist government officials and puppets controlled by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. There are even Pakistanis amongst them. Both Asiaweek (Not so hidden hand, 11/25/96), and Times Magazine (Friends of the Taliban (November, 1996) presented stories of Pakistanis captured amongst the Taliban fighters. Time Magazine even published photographs of Pakistani prisoners, who were captured by the Afghan government, led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani.



The Taliban were trained by the Frontier Constabulary, a para-military force of the Interior Ministry of Pakistan. At that time it was headed by Gen. Nasrullah Babar. The ISI, were not involved in the earlier stages of Taliban development, but they definitely had a hand in the later stages. After Pakistan properly prepared the Taliban, they spread the news that the Taliban is a group fighting the corruption amongst the Mujahideen, on grounds of Islamic convictions and the need to establish peace in that country.

Today, the Taliban leaders claim that the government led by President Rabbani was illegitimate and unislamic. They even branded the famous Mujahideen Commander Ahmad Shah Masood a criminal. Wherever the Taliban conquered, destruction and oppression has followed. So far, they have destroyed historic artwork in Herat, burned villages, committed atrocities against the Shias of Afghanistan, closed schools for girls, banned women from work, started an opium boom, and oppressed men not belonging to their group. In Kabul, they even gathered up hundreds of young men to use as human mine shields.

Pakistan created the Taliban, for the purpose of having indirect control over the policies made in Afghanistan. If Pakistan successfully installs a puppet regime in Afghanistan, they will benefit economically, the Durand treaty will be extended, and Afghanistan will continue to live occupied and in the dark ages.

History teaches us that foreigners do not have much luck in conquering the Afghan people. The British failed in the late 1800s and early 1900s and the Soviets failed recently. In fact, one of the factors that brought an end to the Soviet Empire was the defeat of the Red Army in Afghanistan. History tends to repeat itself: most likely, Pakistan will face the same doom.

### **'Tribal' acts giving a false view of Muslims**

Slaughter in Algeria, the plight of two nurses in Saudi Arabia, and the Taliban's arrest of Emma Bonino give the world a false view of Islam, argues Michael Jansen.

Irish Times

Wednesday, October 1, 1997

The detention on Monday of European Humanitarian Affairs Commissioner Emma Bonino by Taliban moral police in Afghanistan, the sentencing of two British nurses accused of murder to corporal punishments in Saudi Arabia, and the slaughter of 11 schoolmistresses in Algeria send the wrong messages about Islam to the world.

These three examples show Muslims - and by implication their religion - to be intolerant, harsh and bloodthirsty. Unfortunately, these actions speak louder than the words of God set down in the Koran 14 centuries ago, louder than the just pronouncements of the Prophet Muhammad,

louder than the voices of learned jurists who, over the centuries, developed a body of law and practice (the "Sharia") far more enlightened for their time than that in Europe. These examples are not of mainstream Muslim behaviour, expressive of the writ and spirit of Islam or indicative of the teachings of the Prophet. These are examples drawn from the behaviour patterns of tribesmen come to town. Behaviour patterns, indeed, which are pre-Islamic and have little to do with the code of conduct laid down in the Koran and the "traditions" or "hadith" of the Prophet.

Let us look at each case in point. The Taliban is a movement of militant Sunni Muslim Afghan tribesmen from the south of the country. Rural people who live hard lives and employ harsh sanctions to ensure a modicum of order within their closely circumscribed world. In their society women have no rights at all - they are completely covered and totally secluded. Their fathers for the right bride price sell off girls when they are young, and often resold by husbands who tire of them. Unused to the amenities of urban civilisation, the Taliban ban them. There is, for instance, no music in Afghanistan except for unaccompanied religious songs and songs in praise of the Taliban.

Photography is forbidden as anti-Islamic because of the prohibition of "graven images" which could serve as objects of worship. It was photographing women in a shambles of a hospital in Kabul (the only hospital for women in the capital) which sparked the trouble between the Taliban and the European delegation. As far as the unkempt, unwashed and ignorant Taliban morals police who intervened, the Europeans were breaching two bans.

But the Taliban treatment of women and their attitude towards civilisation have nothing to do with the Koran or the practice of the Prophet. The Koran commands women to "be modest" and "to draw their veils over their bosoms" (Surah XXIV, verse 31) not to envelop themselves in the sort of chador worn by Afghan women which leaves only a square of net open for the eyes.

The Prophet was an innovator who gave women legal status, property and inheritance rights. He was a man whose closest confidantes were women, whose first convert was his wife, Khadija, an independent businesswoman. The "canonical punishments" of beheading and flogging as practised in Saudi Arabia are also tribal, relics of the pre-Islamic past when nomadic tribesmen maintained order by lopping off the hands of thieves and the heads of murderers. Blood money was an innovation intended to prevent blood feuds. Like the Taliban, the Saudi rulers are tribal, even after 70 years in power, hailing from the Najd region in the formerly inaccessible centre of the country and professing a puritan form of Islam based on the teachings of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, an 18th century fundamentalist preacher who invested the House of Saud with hereditary kingship.

And since the power base and religious sanction of the monarchy remains the tribal Najd and the reactionary Wahhabi religious establishment, the monarch follows a harsh desert diktat which runs counter to the Muslim belief in a "merciful" and "compassionate" God, a belief reaffirmed in every prayer.

Saudi law and practice has not been refined to suit an urban setting or a cosmopolitan context. This is why pre-Islamic corporal punishments are imposed on all who dwell within the kingdom, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. But it is only when the punishments are applied to Western

women like Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan that the world takes notice. The brutal massacres conducted by the Armed Islamic Groups in Algeria are not only an aberration but an abomination in Islam. The Koran lays down humane rules of war while the Prophet ordered his own troops, when fighting for the faith, to "kill not the old men who cannot fight, nor young children nor women".

The roving bands of Algerian murderers who claim to kill in the name of Islam and God, are apostates, rejecting both the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet. They are men led astray by commanders and clerics who are veterans of the particularly bloody and brutal war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. This war was financed by Saudi Arabia at the instigation of the United States, and the "mujahedin", the "holy warriors", fighting in the anti-communist crusade were given religious instruction by preachers provided by the Saudis.

Foreign "mujahedin", known as "Afghans", were recruited from all over the Arab world, trained in Pakistan, sent into battle and then discarded once the Russians pulled out of Afghanistan. Many who returned home became involved in Islamist opposition activities and have been either killed or arrested by their own governments. Others turned up in Bosnia or the Palestinian occupied territories, eager recruits for warfare against "enemies of Islam" like the Serbs and Israelis.

Like the "Afghans", the Taliban are Pakistan-trained and Saudi indoctrinated and financed, so it is not surprising that there are many similarities between Taliban and Saudi rule, and not simply on the tribal level.

It is a tragedy for Islam that the tribalist Wahhabi agenda, backed up by Arabian petro-dollars, should be a major force in the Umma at this time of world transformation. For the Wahhabis have reacted to the challenge of modernisation by trying to force the Umma into an idealised seventh century "Islamic" mould instead of creating a determination to take on the present and provide a relevant, progressive Islamic framework for Muslims.

### **Perspective on Women's Plight in Afghanistan**

The Taliban have forced Women to cover themselves from head to toe. Even the face is covered; this is in direct contradiction to Islamic Law!

Today, in Afghanistan a woman's basic right to vote, to pursue an education, and to join the job force, is threatened by Taliban, a political group that has recently gained control of the country.

Taliban's insistence on secluding women from public life is a political maneuver disguised as "Islamic" law. Before seizing power, Taliban manipulated and used the rights of women as tools to gain control of the country. To secure financial and political support, Taliban emulated authoritarian methods typical of many Middle Eastern countries. Taliban's stand on the seclusion of women is not derived from Islam, but, rather, from a cultural bias found in suppressive movements throughout the region.

Once Taliban seized power, a classical pattern that has been observed in some Muslim countries repeated itself. In this scenario, political instability coexists with an extreme and oppressive ideology regarding women. Some members of Taliban have been quoted as saying that these actions are temporary and that women's rights will be restored once the government is more stable. One must bear in mind that, as history has amply demonstrated, other Muslim countries have committed the same atrocities and the result is that women within their boundaries continue to be oppressed, politically and otherwise. To maintain control over the people, radical groups such as Taliban divert attention away from political and economic crises by oppressing half of the population.

Such a view has no basis in the Qur'an, yet it has been promoted by Taliban as "Islamic." This situation is very distressing considering that women were given rights in the Qur'an to contribute to the economy by owning and selling property 1400 years ago:

Men shall have a benefit from what they earn, and women shall have a benefit from what they earn. (4:32)

This verse emphasizes the equality of men and women in the economic growth of a society. In the earliest Muslim community, women carried out business transactions and participated in battles without restriction. The Qur'an and the examples of the first Muslim society give the Muslim Women's League a voice to state that the current manipulation of women to serve geopolitical interests, in Afghanistan or elsewhere, is both unIslamic and inhumane.

#### **PARTS OF MULLA NIAZI'S SPEECH ( GOVERNOR OF MAZAR SHARIF)**

"... Do you know last year you fired us from every house?  
You killed 10,000 Talibs, those who Memorised Quranic Verses in their chests.  
Pashtoons, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmen are brothers. Turkmen are good people. They have never fired on us.

Hazara should study their hundred years ago history. What you become? If you won't be honest, all of you will be killed.

Where do you escape? If you go to Bamyan, it is in our control. Every where in Afghanistan you go, will be our territory. I am clearly saying that if you are not hand over and not show

your honesty, either you will be killed or thrown out of the country or you like Hindus you should pay us. If even one fire come from your side, we will put on fire the entire area.

If you want to live along with other Afghan ethnic groups, you should never think of sharing and participating in the future government structure.

Hazaras! Where are you escaping? If you jumped in to the air we will grasp your legs, if you enter the earth we will grasp your ears. Hazaras are not Muslim. You can killed them.it is not a sin.

Oh Hazaras! Become Muslims and pray God as us.

We won't let you to go away. Every border is in our control.

10,000 Talibs came last year as guest but you kill them.we will kill you the same way you killed them.

They must remain unburied on streets for three days. We kill you and no body is allowed to bury the death bodies till three days..."

On women issues the governor said:

"...we actually do not need women work. What positive roles can they play in the society? What is the impact of their roles? We do not need women. They should stay in their houses. Those who send their daughters to the university can say me who ensure that these girls have no illegal relation with boys.

Hazrat Ali the fourth leader of Muslim Umma after the Prophet Mohammed, himself said" I would not control myself with a stranger women, even for half an hour". Then how can we do so..."

## **Appedex A**

### **Taliban: Ring of Leadership**

Top Command:

Mullah Mohammad Omar

Inner Shura:

Mullah Mohammed Rabbani

Mullah Ehsanullah

Mullah Abbas

Mullah Mohammed

Mullah Pasani

Central Shura:

Mullah Mohammed Hassan

Mullah Nur al-Din

Mullah Wakil Ahmad

Mullah Shir Mohammed Malang

Mullah Abd al-Rahman

Mullah Abd al-Hakim

Sardar Ahmad

Haji Mohammed Ghaus

Ma'soom Afghani

Liason officer in NWFP

Abd al-Rahman (Rashid) Zahid

Liason officer in Quetta

Mohammed Ma'soom

Kabul 6 man supervisory council

Mullah Mohammed Hassan Akhund (Vice Chair)

Mullah Mohammed Rabbani

Mullah Mohammed Hassan

Mullah Mohammed Ghaus

Mullah Syed Ghayasuddin Agha (Education)

Mullah Gazil Mohammed

Mullah Abdul Razzoq (customs)

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Source: Mohammed Zahid  
Frontier Post, Feb. 24, 1995