

Afghanistan: Kabul Diaries - From 16 Aug to 28 Aug 2021

Monday 30 August 2021, by [AFGHAN Yasmeeen](#) (Date first published: 28 August 2021).

The *daily Jeddojehad* [Struggle], a leftwing online Urdu-language paper in Pakistan s posting reports from Kabul. Filed by Yasmeeen Afghan [not the real name], these reports depict picture from inside Kabul and cover what is often ignored in the mainstream. For a wider translation, these reports are translated to English. [1]

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Part 1

First day of Taliban occupation: Anger, fear, helplessness (posted Aug 16).

The Afghans are shocked by the sudden fall of provinces to the Taliban. Until a few days ago, when the Taliban offensive against the Afghan army escalated, many Afghans took to social media. Many were demanding sanctions against Pakistan. The sentiments were high as many Afghans felt that Afghanistan had been sold in an already pre-planned plan by the USA to the Taliban.

Nothing was more shocking than the breaking news that 'Kabul would fall within hours'. As I write this, Kabul has already fallen to the Taliban.

My mother, who has seen forty years of the Afghan conflict, was very angry at the rumors about Kabul's fall. "Every Afghan knows that the Taliban would not have been able to fight the Afghan army but a deal was already struck with the Taliban and they are now roaming in Kabul," she was saying.

Many people from the provinces fled to Kabul, thinking they would be saved from the wrath of the Taliban. There are chaotic scenes at Kabul's parks as internally displaced people (IDPs) have taken refuge there.

They have no food or place to sleep. Many families fled for the fear of being targeted or their

daughters being abducted by the militants. There are reports that in Takhar, girls were kidnapped and in some cases, were forced-married to the Taliban soldiers.

There are also reports that women university students and professors were sent back in Herat province. Reportedly, in Kandahar nine women workers of a private bank were sent back home and were asked that their male family members could work instead of them.

Kabul has been gripped by fear since yesterday. Till the very last moment, the activists were hopeful that Kabul would not fall. But as the scenes changed on the ground people have stormed banks to withdraw money and move elsewhere. A day before the fall of Kabul, there were rumours that President Ghani would resign. However, after his TV speech, things apparently got normal. Before his address, dollar had jumped to 100 Afghanis. After his address, it declined to 85 Afghanis.

Kawoon Khamoosh, an Afghan journalist, tweeted: "Kabul is nothing short of an atomic heart at the moment. I crossed Wazir Akbar Khan and saw people overflowing from the streets as if it's an apocalypse. Miserable faces, desperate youth and families stuck in heavy traffic."

Children as young as 7-year-old fear the Taliban. The youngest generation in Kabul has always lived under a relatively democratic government and explaining to these young children about the Taliban is a task many families have undertaken to prepare their young kids for a tomorrow where they will have to follow a strict dress code, or to see their mothers covering their faces.

Anger and frustration are high among the Afghans as many fear that their hard earned rights would be taken away. Many are calling out the international community for turning a blind eye to the critical situation in Afghanistan and allowing the Taliban to enter Kabul.

Rawan Karwan, a social media user, stated, "lost everything. My hope for a bright future of my country, my dream to have a strong and stable Afghanistan. My heart is bleeding. Our allies turned their back on our people, they handed us over to brutalities."

The head of Afghan Film Corporation, Sahraa Karimi, tweeted: "There is no peace deal, it was a deal to give Afghanistan to the Taliban."

Pashtana Zalmi Khan Durrani, an educationist, mourned: "first the leaders sold us out and then the west sold us out and now the Taliban are just taking their bounty, women are treated as goods in this war."

Rada Akbar, an artist, stated: "The world should feel embarrassed. I am disgusted."

In another tweet she said, "My Afghanistan, we are left alone, with many enemies but this shall pass too and we will rise again but will never forget what the world did to us."

Part 2

2nd day of Taliban occupation: 'Silence in Kabul scary than bomb blasts' (first posted Aug 17)

The first night under the Taliban rule, after a lapse of 20 years, was a nightmare for Afghan women.

The Afghan women from all walks of life are living in uncertainty and are indeed fearful for their hard-earned rights, soon to be snatched away.

The Kabul residents, especially the women, feel helpless and shocked. They wonder what might unfold in the coming days.

The young Afghan women, mostly grown post-9/11, know about their rights and have lived under a republic. In the past 20 years, the women in Afghanistan, particularly in Kabul, were part of almost every institution. Millions of girls were going to school while thousands were attending universities.

They were trying to enjoy and take advantage of the rights guaranteed to them in the Afghan constitution. All of a sudden you become invisible in the public. For the past 24 hours, women in Kabul have been invisible. Fear of being targeted has made them stay home. A day after the occupation, Kabul was dead silent.

Fatima, a lady doctor in Kabul, said: "The silence is killing. There is a strange fear in my heart. The silence of Kabul is disturbing and unsettling than scary bomb blasts we were used to. I have not been able to sleep, there is a heavy burden on my heart as the future is unclear."

Sohila, from Jalalabad, is a second-year student at the English Faculty. She said: "I had to take sleeping pills to sleep as the uncertainty was taking a toll on me. I don't know if I will be able to graduate from the university."

Saeeda, who works for one of the government institutions in Kabul while crying stated, "I cannot imagine being confined to the four walls of the house. Studied tirelessly and worked for a better future but now I don't know what tomorrow will bring."

A Gym owner in the west of Kabul city who does not want her name to be disclosed told me while crying, "I have to escape with my 16-year-old daughter. The Taliban already deem we are working for the USA and I am scared they might snatch away my daughter. I have to escape to protect my daughter."

Hasina Shirzad tweeted, "My sister in Kabul told me, I cannot wear a Chadari (Burqa) and tolerate once more being whipped. We both cried over the phone."

Haniya, a university student, stated, "As soon as we heard that the Taliban were at Kabul gates, we rushed to the market to buy Burqas so that at least we can stay safe."

Shukria Barakzai, an ex.MP and ambassador, tweeted: "Kabul and it's people are in complete shock and trauma. Never knew this game would be repeated and played again that soon."

Meanwhile on the other side of the border, some elite women from Pakistan are cheering for the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

Part 3

'Instead of granting amnesty Taliban should instead ask us for amnesty'

(first posted Aug 18)

During the period Taliban were ruling Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, the group committed heinous crimes against the Afghan people. The Afghan women were confined to their houses and were invisible from the public.

A Taliban clip has gone viral, showing them addressing female doctors, and reassuring them that they should not be scared and continue to work as the society needs them. The Taliban have also asked government employees to return to their offices and continue working without any restrictions. However, the people are skeptical at the moment and don't want to trust them. Many fear that the Taliban will identify and trace them down once the international evacuation is completed.

Najia (not her real name), a government employee, stated, "I will wait for the next couple of days and see how things are going. After consultation with my family, I will decide whether I want to rejoin my office or not. Though the Taliban have said that women can work, how can one be sure after their brutal past."

Two days ago, a female anchor appeared on one of the private television channels and just today, Tolo news, the most watched television channel in Afghanistan had a female anchor interview a Taliban member. This is surprising for many.

35 years old Khatira (not real name) from the Khairkhana district of Kabul stated, "Two decades ago, this was unthinkable, but now we are seeing a female presenter on screen under Taliban rule". However, she also added that "we should not get ahead of ourselves as who knows how long will this stay."

Despite repeated Taliban broadcasts that there is an amnesty for government employees and that they (government employees) shouldn't feel threatened, people are fearful and worried.

Shagufa Noorzai member of Afghan Parliament tweeted, "I feel as if I have aged drastically in the past few days"

Some people are angry that the Taliban keep repeating that they have announced amnesty for all Afghans, and many, such as the 47-year-old Nadia from the west of Kabul, argue, "the criminals should instead ask us for amnesty."

Afghanistan has come a long way since 2001. The new generation is educated and have stood for their rights from time to time during the 20 years of the Afghan republic. Thus, it might prove hard for the Taliban to force their strict sharia law on the people. This is especially true for Afghan women, who seem to be in no mood to compromise this time.

Part 4

'Every knock at the door sinks my heart. I feel they have come to kill me'

(first posted Aug 20)

One of the biggest achievements of Afghanistan during the past 20 years was the proliferation of media outlets and the strengthening of freedom of expression. Afghanistan has one of the best media laws in the region.

The television channels in Afghanistan were producing satires against the government and one of the programs, "Shabak-e-Khanda" had audiences stop all other chores to watch it.

Despite announcing amnesty to everyone, the Taliban have started attacking local journalists and camerapersons.

Hasiba Atakpal, reporter for a local television, tweeted, "After Zabiullah Mujahid's conference, I was hopeful, however, now it's clear that there is a gap between action and words. Today, the Taliban hit my colleague and fired in the air."

Since 2001, the Taliban have been involved in killing journalists and members of the media in Afghanistan. Zabiullah Mujahid in his first interaction with Afghan media, was sitting in the very spot where Dawa Khan Menapal, the head of the Afghan government's media and information center, used to sit. Menapal was killed by the Taliban on 6th August 2021 and Zabillah Mujahid had himself claimed responsibility for the assassination.

Marzia (not her real name) "It's ironic that the guy who claimed responsibility for the killing of the head of media and information is now sitting in his place. All I can ask is, where is Afghanistan going?"

Over the past few days, local journalists living in Kabul have started to tweet less and less as there is a high concern that the Taliban will take revenge. The twitter handles that I personally follow have either not tweeted since the pasty 3-4 days, or their accounts do not exist anymore. Many journalists have gone into hiding, and while some have emerged in the public, most are trying to keep a low profile.

One of the local journalists who didn't want her name to be disclosed, stated, "Every knock at the door sinks my heart. I feel they have come to kill me."

She adds further, "Afghanistan has been destroyed. The future is bleak and dark. There is no hope for the future."

The Afghan media is at the receiving end of the Taliban. They have become a soft target. They have been beaten and humiliated for covering the news and this has created an atmosphere of fear among them.

A local media outlet has stated that the Taliban have beaten journalists in Kabul for covering the demonstrations and celebrations on Afghanistan's Independence Day.

Another local journalist who didn't want to be named, said, "How can we trust them? This is just the start of their 'film', I am sure the end will be dire for us all free and fair journalists."

Part 5

Before the Taliban Occupation: Anecdotes from Kabul University

First posted: 24 August 2021.

I am at a loss for words, I don't know how I should write, what I want to write. I am desperately trying to reach a few friends but have not been able to since Kabul fell to the Taliban.

In 2010, while I was working for one of the international news organizations, I decided to complete my university degree. I enrolled in the evening classes of one of the private universities in Kabul. The evening classes had girls, boys, men, and women from different organizations.

I joined the law faculty, our class had five girls and 25 men from the US embassy to the security directorate of Afghanistan. I started off to be a bit unfriendly with my three classmates from the directorate as over the years I had heard about those working for the national security directorate to be ruthless and unjust. I had heard the stories about the Najibullah period so basically that was the reason I was hostile towards them. The three of them were almost in their late thirties or something, were married and had children.

In a week's time, things changed; I warmed up to them after one of them stood up for me against a harasser in the university. I started to talk to them more and would hang out during break times with them. From having coffees to eating corn in the winter snows, we would joke and eat together. The main topic of discussion would always be politics and there were even arguments and shouting too but they would call me Rafeeq (buddy) and everything would go back to normal. One day one of them said, Rafeeq is very hot headed and we should not discuss politics with her but then the other two laughed and told me that he was only teasing me.

I still remember that as a strong headed girl, I would not listen to anyone and I was the only girl not covering my head and they would always defend me if anyone would try to say anything.

I felt protected around them. I felt they were my family. We were from two different ethnic groups but still they would not go home till they were not sure that my driver was there to pick me up.

I told one of them in 2017 that my husband will be visiting Kabul and I was scared for his security, he laughed and assured me that he will personally take me to the airport and that my husband will be saved and protected during his stay in Kabul.

I have been thinking about them constantly over the past one week. As soon as the Taliban entered Kabul, my mind automatically went to them because I knew they would be the first target.

I was frantically searching for them for days and finally I was able to talk to one of them today. First, we were chatting. Then all of a sudden I had this fear that what if on the other side is a Taliban member and trying to extract information from me about him so I asked him to call.

As soon as I heard his voice I was like, Oh God, thank God, you are safe! I will not divulge the information where he is at the moment but knowing that he is fine was one of the best news in days. I asked about the other two classmates and he told me that the day Kabul fell was the last time he had heard from them and since then their phones have been switched off.

I cannot stop thinking about their smiling faces or how they would stand up for me for other girls in trouble. Their attitude and love for Afghanistan made me see the national directorate of security in a

different light. I started to like and respect NDS and would listen to their stories. Over the past couple of days, I cannot help think that they were not part of NDS. I wish they had a different profession but then I think that at the moment, Afghans who have worked in any field are a target so nothing would have saved them.

I feel so helpless and hopeless thinking about them and their families. Where they might be and under which conditions? Will I ever be able to hear their voices again? My heart sinks and breaks to a million pieces by what if....

Part 6

One week of Taliban Occupation

First posted: 25 August 2021.

While some of the world leaders are trying to negotiate with the Taliban and trying to impose the narrative of 'reformed or good Taliban', the Afghans on the other hand are losing on all fronts. They are trying to survive despite an uncertain future.

One of the challenges these days is that Afghans are slowly descending into starvation not only in Kabul but elsewhere in the country.

Farid (not his real name), a student and shopkeeper in one of the villages of Nangarhar province said, "Things changed so quickly. There is almost no stock in the market and also people don't have the money to buy things."

A resident of Kabul said, "We don't have money to buy anything. The food prices are very high. I don't know how long my family will be able to survive."

Modaser Islami, a freelancer in Kabul, tweeted that fruit sellers have told him, "Few people visit our shops now because they are unable to buy stuff."

The collapse of Kabul resulted in closure of all banks. People had stormed the banks to withdraw cash, but all was in vain as there was none in the ATMs. As a result, many Kabul residents have run out of hard currency, and this has made it difficult for people to provide for their daily expenses.

Ata (not his real name) a Kabul resident stated, " I just have 2000 Afghanis in my pockets. I shudder at the thought of an emergency at home."

Residents of Kabul are calling other provinces even for mobile top-up cards and fear is growing in the intellectual circles that if they run out of these cards, soon then they will not have internet and thus won't not be able to share about the chaotic scenes in Afghanistan.

Taimour, a resident of Kunduz stated, "We are slowly losing the contact with outside world as we cannot find top-up cards and thus will have no access to share the realities of Taliban with the rest of the world."

Many government employees have not been paid as the collapse was very sudden [wages are paid

according to Persian calendar]. People have cited concerns that they are not able to pay their rents, or buy petrol and fuel. Life in Kabul and other major cities will come to a standstill if the banks do not open soon, and this will result in another crisis.

A Kabul resident who is a government employee and didn't want to reveal his identity stated, "I have not been paid. Everything is skyrocketing. We are living in miserable conditions."

A female teacher in Mazar stated, "our salaries were already not sufficient but now not being paid has burdened our lives. I have a young son, who has a heart problem and must buy medicine for him but tell me how?"

Many Afghans who were contacted are living in dire conditions and need help. A United Nations assessment of the food security and nutrition situation in Afghanistan finds one in three Afghans face acute food insecurity. That means an estimated 14 million people in the war-torn country are barely able to meet their daily minimum food needs.

Thoryalai in Kabul stated, "My neighbor asked for 1000 Afghanis but I had to decline as I have little cash and with the food prices going higher with each day, I feel bad that I have to think about my family before I think about others."

Shareen, who has recently arrived from Farah province stated, "The ticket prices were very high when we were coming. My brothers live in Kabul, and I had to come here as overall food prices are high. I thought maybe Kabul would be better, but things are dire here too. Only Allah can save us now."

Part 7

'Missing Kabul while living in Kabul'

First posted: 28 Aug 2021

Life under the Taliban is taking a toll on Afghans. There is no public life at the moment. Mullahs have been introduced to a few government posts and the rest of the educated population have been side-lined as if they do not exist. Women have already been told to stay at home as the Taliban fighters have not been trained on how to behave with them. These are grim and bleak times for the people of Afghanistan and especially the residents of Kabul. Nobody wants to go out unnecessarily and most people prefer to stay at home. The tragedy next to the airport has been covered by most international media but what is unfolding far from the airport and in the other parts of Kabul city and other provinces does not reach the world.

Shabana Dawran was a Presenter and editor at RTA (Radio, Television Afghanistan). She put out a tweet saying "I live in Kabul but I am missing Kabul."

If you come across any working Afghan woman who is now forced to stay at home till further notice, she will tell you the same thing that they miss Kabul, miss being outside.

Zohal (not her real name), 46 years old, who works for an Afghan NGO stated, "I know I cannot go to my office at the moment, but I try my level best to work from home despite all the threats."

She added further, "I have lived under the Taliban's previous period for two years and I know how brutal they will get once the pull out is complete so basically, we should be prepared for the worst."

Zala Zazai, who was an active reserve officer at the Ministry of Interior has stated, "My mother was not able to complete her education because of the dark period of the Taliban and after the Taliban period, her husband (my father) didn't allow her to complete her education. Recently she was able to achieve this dream. My mother was a second year Law Faculty. Unfortunately, the Taliban came back and my mother's dream was shattered."

Wajiha (not her real name), a Kabul resident said, "I am worried for my 13-year-old daughter. Will she be able to complete her education? I don't know where we can escape to."

Homeira Qaderi, an author and human rights advocate said, "We have lost our joys. We have lost our colors. We have lost our choices. We have lost our words."

Habib Khan, a journalist, put out a statement from one of his interviews to CBC news on his Twitter account, "Afghanistan has become a great prison for its own people."

A Kabul resident who didn't want to be identified stated, "There is peace in a graveyard too. Does the world want us to live in a graveyard without any rights? Will they call that a life?"

Shafiqah Khpulwak, a well-known poet, fiction writer and columnist tweeted, "It was not the fall of Kabul. It was the fall of our identity. Freedom, cultural heritage, history, diversity, dreams, and the future. The future that we were promised to be different. To be better."

The lives of Afghans from all walks of lives have been impacted by the recent developments in Afghanistan. During the Taliban regime from 1996-2001, music was banned and anybody listening to any sort of music was punished severely.

Nadia Momand, who works for Enikass TV Nangarhar said, "Today my heart is hurting. Afghan National Institute of Music destroyed their musical instruments. The Orchestra team members of Afghanistan went to their houses, and they will not play again. End..."

Yasmeen Afghan

Footnotes

[1] Here is link to the daily Jeddojehad : <https://jeddojehad.com/>