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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 13

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Articles have been accepted in good faith, if you have any queries please contact the editor

FROM THE CONVENER

A year ago SAWA pledged to support Naseema Shaheed High School by raising sufficient funds to pay all teachers and other staff and provide for all material needs of the school. One year has passed, and I can report that we managed to fulfil our pledge. It was not an easy task. For many months it looked as if we would not reach our target. But the flow of donations increased as we approached the Christmas period, and we could end the year with good news for the school. SAWA raised more than \$28,000 in 2006 in donations, which allows us to honour our pledge in full.

Much of the credit for this success goes to two groups of active members in Adelaide and Sydney, who organized special fundraising events, and to supporters who make regular donations through subscription to the SAWAN. Our aim for the new year is to see this active support continue and expand into other cities around the country.

For the people of Afghanistan the new year will without doubt bring more suffering and agony. The Taliban have declared war on schools and teachers. The government is giving posts to fundamentalist tribal leaders. The "International Security Assistance Force" of NATO acts as an occupation force and is more and more discredited. Most refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan are controlled by fundamentalists as well. Khewa refugee camp, where RAWA runs its school and clinic, is a safe haven for women and a place of hope for all Afghans. It depends on the support of people around the world. The last SAWAN introduced Malalai, teacher at Naseema Shaheed High School. This issue introduces Shukria, a teacher of year three classes. Future issues will also include profiles of some of the students and describe their hopes and aspirations. Let us make sure that their hopes are not in vain and strengthen our support for Naseema Shaheed High School!

Matthias Tomczak

Fundraising in Adelaide

SAWA held a very successful fundraising dinner on Thursday 16th November at the Pondok Bali restaurant. The owner Mr Junaidi Djapri and staff made us very welcome and cheerfully provided us with a delicious authentic Balinese and Indonesian banquet. Sixty people attended so we were able to book out the entire restaurant. The atmosphere was relaxed and colourful, with a silent auction of donated goods and the exotic dancing of Nayima Hassan from www.bellydanceacademy.com to keep us entertained.

Our theme for the night was, in the words of Martin Luther King, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter". SAWA committee member Barbara James gave some background about the plight of Afghan women and children today. She also spoke about the Naseema Shaheed High School in Khewa refugee camp, one of the largest Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan. The school depends on SAWA-Australia to keep it running.

We raised \$1445, which was a fantastic achievement for SAWA's first fundraising dinner in Adelaide. SAWA would like to thank all those who attended on the night for their participation and support. SAWA would also like to sincerely thank those individuals and businesses who so generously donated goods or services



Barbara and her daughter and willing assistant Georgia at the dinner

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SAWA OBJECTIVES

- Raise funds for Afghan women and children;
- increase community awareness of the forgotten needs of Afghan women;
- encourage women, men and young people to join SAWA-Australia ;
- set up SAWA/RAWA support groups throughout Australia.

Convener: Matthias Tomczak

Secretary: Barbara Kameniar

Treasurer: Heidi Lefanue

Committee: Ruth Redfern, Barbara James, Colin Banks

Newsletter Editor: Matthias Tomczak

Public Officer: Colin Banks

Auditor: Barry Hocking

on the night: Belly Dance Academy of Nayima Hassan, KAVA 5068 Café, Silver Earth Trading Co, The Avenues St Peters Florist, The Avenues Shopping Centre, Dillons Newsagency, French Faces by Helena, Antonas Pharmacy, Fruit & Veg Kensington Pk Shopping Centre, Cibo Ristorante, Avenues Digital Photos, Angelika Erbsland, Norwood Soap Shop, Healthy Life Norwood, Jonette's Nails & Beauty Shop, House in the Parade Norwood, Trak Cinema, The Salon Kensington, Booze Brothers and The Avenues Newsagency.

Barbara James

Fundraising in Sydney

When the word went out that a lunch in Balmain was being planned to raise funds for Naseema Shaheed High School the response was immediate and totally positive. Individuals giving enthusiastic support in the planning and networking of the fund-raising event made it a huge success.

On Thursday 16th November, 100 people enjoyed a delicious 3 course meal at *Finola's Restaurant* in the Balmain Bowling Club. Over \$3,886 was raised on the day. This included monies from donations, raffles and profit from sale of lunch tickets. In the next few days the amount grew to over \$4,000 and another 20 people had become members of SAWA.

As people arrived they received a copy of The SAWAN (August 2006) containing a report on Naseema Shaheed High School as well as a SAWA subscription form. We thank Tanya Plibersek M.P. and her office staff for the contribution of photocopying.

Raffle prizes included a \$150 hair treatment voucher donated by Diane O'Dwyer of *Locks Hair Services*; a Sri Lankan Royal Feast for 8 to 10 people served in your own home donated by Paul van Reyk of *Buth Kuddeh Sri Lankan Catering*; a beautiful ceramic vase from Larissa Wasylenska and a dinner for two at *Finola's Restaurant* donated by Finola Healey. We also received an anonymous donation of 6 bottles of wine which provided lucky chair prizes for 6 lucky people.

The co-operation and support provided by the Balmain Bowling Club, Finola Healey and staff contributed to making the lunch a most enjoyable success.

And more: While her husband has been working with NGOs Annie Bell and family have lived in 6 different countries in the last 10 years. This has given Annie the chance to make contact with various self-help groups which she supports by marketing their products back here in Australia.

Annie contacted me immediately after attending the SAWA lunch and offered to do a fund-raiser in her home with the day's profit going to SAWA. With 80% of the items priced between \$10 and \$35 Christmas shopping was very easy, and self-help groups from many areas including Kenya and Soweto also benefited. Annie's Sale of Jewellery and African Crafts raised just over \$2,087 for SAWA.

As well as knowing that they are doing something concrete for RAWA and thus for the people of Afghanistan, many have commented on the positive and focussed structure of SAWA.

It was Nelson Mandela who said "A country cannot succeed unless its future leaders are educated."

Dawn Atkinson

RAWA communiqué on Universal Human Rights Day, 10 December 2006 (excerpt)

Afghanistan the Bloodiest Field for Slaughtering Human Rights

Five years ago, America and their allies attacked Afghanistan in the name of bringing "Human Rights", "Democracy", and "Freedom" to the war-torn country. The Taliban regime fell and Hamid Karzai's puppet regime, which included the world-known Northern Alliance criminals, or as UN envoy Mahmoud Mestri said, "the bandit gangs", took over in the name of a fake democracy. However, today, the deceitful policies of Mr. Karzai and his Western guardians have brought Afghanistan to a very critical situation in which disaster is a ticking time bomb that can explode any minute. Treason and mockery have efficiently been used under the name of "democracy" and "freedom" in these five years, and the human rights situation in Afghanistan is a product of the painful deception of the warlord led government.

Northern Alliance criminals backed by the US have their own local and barbaric governments. Just the increasing amount of women who commit suicides by burning themselves can be the best example of a human rights violation in Afghanistan. According to UNICEF, 65% of 50,000 widows in Kabul think that committing suicide is the only option they have. Northern Alliance crooks raped an 11 year old girl, Sanuber, and traded her with a dog. In Badakhshan a young woman was gang-raped by 13 Jehadies in front of her children. (...)

The disgraceful defeat and embarrassing situation in the war in Iraq left no option for the US except to illustrate Afghanistan as a success, whether it results in pain and suffering for the Afghan people or not. The disagreement among NATO members and the stand of some member states against the will of the US made the situation harder for the White House. Therefore, America tries to keep a fragile, temporary stability in Afghanistan in order to promote a sense of accomplishment in producing a "democratic" Afghanistan all around the world, a "B52 democracy" in expanse to treason against the majority of Afghan people. (...)

First the US divided the Taliban criminals into "moderate" and "non-moderate" factions. In the first stage Taliban criminal leaders such as Mullah Rocketi, Arsela Rahmani, Mullah Khaksar, Wakil Ahmad Motawakil, Qalamaddin etc. were stamped as being "moderate Taliban" and allowed to make their way into Parliament. Now, two criminal gangster leaders, Gulbuddin and Mullah Omer, were invited to join the government. In this case, only Al-Qaida remains to be invited to join the rotten Afghan Government. (...)

Since the Northern Alliance criminals were installed into power, RAWA has been saying that it is impossible to bring peace, human rights and stability with a gang of criminals in power. Today even the western media points out the Jehadi warlords as a main problem in destabilizing Afghanistan, which proves RAWA's analysis. (...) The biggest factor in destabilizing Afghanistan is inside Afghanistan. As long as the main issue inside has not been solved, solving the external issues cannot be effective.

The biggest factor that strengthens the Taliban is the hatred and disgust that our people have against the Jehadi mafia in the system. When people have no security, when they see

lawlessness and how the criminals embezzle millions of dollars from international aid, they are indifferent about the rise of the Taliban. Haji Nek Mohammad who had lost his beloved in a NATO's air strike in Kandahar said, "I prefer to join the Taliban forces because Taliban have so far killed only 2 people in my village while the coalition forces killed 63 people in a single day."

Our people know that there is no difference between Taliban and Jehadi warlords. They both are fundamentalist medieval forces that were created by foreigners and they will join forces against our people in any possible time. (...) We announced on the first day of the US invasion that there is not one example in history where a foreign force brings freedom to another nation; only the people of Afghanistan themselves can gain these values.

Without the end of the fundamentalists' rule, observance of human rights is just a dream!
Hold the struggle flag of freedom, democracy and social justice!
With people against fundamentalism or with fundamentalists against people; there is not a third option!
Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), 10 December 2006

The full text of the declaration is on the SAWA website at <http://www.sawa-australia.org/news/humanrightsdays.html>

Pharmaceuticals for Malalai Clinic arrive safely

In the August edition of the SAWAN we announced that OPAL (Overseas Pharmaceutical Aid for Life) was preparing another shipment of pharmaceuticals for RAWA's Malalai Clinic. Unfortunately this took longer than expected. In early October OPAL changed hands and had to reorganize its work. The backlog of orders was cleared before year's end, and we can report that \$7,624.61 worth of medicines was airfreighted to Pakistan in December. Another smaller consignment with medicine to treat Parkinson's disease went to a male RAWA supporter in Islamabad. SAWA is extremely grateful for OPAL's generous assistance with free medicine for RAWA's Malalai Clinic.

A teacher profile

In the last newsletter we presented the first of a series of teacher profiles from Naseema Shaheed High School, SAWA's major support project. In this issue we introduce Shukria, the teacher of the year 3 class.

My name is Shukria, I am 37 years old. I was born in Kabul and got my primary and secondary education from there. After that, I attended The Roshan Institute of Teacher Training for three years but could not get my degree as the Taliban stopped women from attending it.

Like any other Afghan woman I have suffered a lot in the past decades of armed conflict in Afghanistan. I lost my mother at the age of ten. My fifteen year old brother was martyred during the Mujahedeen infighting in Kabul (the civil war) in 1993. The fundamentalists even destroyed our house and plundered everything. After the Taliban came to power in Kabul, I was forced to leave my studies incomplete and got married at the age of 27 in 1997. My husband was killed by the Taliban in 2000; I became a

widow with my two children and my life was ruined. Along with my two children I migrated to Pakistan in a very terrible condition, and here RAWA helped me and I joined the RAWA projects for widows. I was trained for one year in a nursing course of RAWA and worked as a nurse in Malalai Hospital in Rawalpindi for 2 years. In the year 2003, my 5 year old son was killed in a traffic accident, which was another blow in my life.

When RAWA scaled down the hospital and moved it to Khewa camp near Peshawar, I also shifted to Khewa camp and was accepted as a teacher for class 3 in Naseema Shaheed High School.

Since two years I am living with my seven year old daughter in Khewa refugee camp. I am still working with RAWA, and they have given me a lot of hope and helped me in my worst times. I am really grateful to RAWA, because tens of thousands of war widows are living under catastrophic conditions in Afghanistan but I found the opportunity to have a better life and use my skills to give education and care to Afghan girls.

I thank RAWA supporters in Australia for supporting our school, we always tell our students to know about your efforts and devotion to help us keep the school running.



Shukria in her class in Naseema Shaheed High School

A volunteer reports on her time with RAWA

Last year Kate Hannan spent several weeks as an English teacher with RAWA. Here is a very brief excerpt from her report.

I had gone to Rawalpindi to help in one of RAWA's orphanages, intending to teach English for a month. (...) I worked with 56 children, aged between six and sixteen, each with a tragic story, yet each with a determination not to be defeated by their personal tragedy. Rather, these children were filled with a love of life and learning. They attended school in two shifts, and when they were not at school could attend extra English classes, including mine, and extra computer classes held at the orphanage by RAWA members and supporters. (...) Some of the girls [of the camp school] I spoke to had refused to return to their extended families for fear of being married off before being able to finish their education. One girl described much of the thinking in Afghanistan as being 'backward' and was delighted to be able to study in the camp school. (...)

The full report can be read on RAWA's website at <http://www.rawa.org/tours/kate.htm>

The Taliban declare war on teachers and schools

In November 2006 the Swiss weekly Die Weltwoche published a German translation of a new Book of Rules (Layeha) for Taliban fighters. It was distributed initially to the 33 members of the Shura, the highest Taliban council, at their meeting during Ramadan 2006.

While some of the 30 rules seem to guarantee the safety of civilians (such as "A Mujahid or leader who torments an innocent person must be warned by his superiors. If he does not change his behaviour he must be thrown out of the Taliban movement." - "It is strictly forbidden to search houses or confiscate weapons without the permission of a district or provincial commander." - "Mujahideen have no right to confiscate money or personal possessions of civilians."), which may explain why parts of the population are ambivalent to their rise, the rules leave no doubt about the Taliban's ulterior motives: They want to eliminate all secular education and turn Afghanistan again into a fundamentalist nightmare. Rules 24 and 25 state:

24) It is forbidden to work as a teacher under the current puppet regime, because this strengthens the system of the infidels. True Muslims should apply to study with a religiously trained teacher and study in a Mosque or similar institution. Textbooks must come from the period of the Jihad or from the Taliban regime."

25) Anyone who works as a teacher for the current puppet regime must receive a warning. If he nevertheless refuses to give up his job, he must be beaten. If the teacher still continues to instruct contrary to the principles of Islam, the district commander or a group leader must kill him."

The full text of the rule book can be found at <http://www.sawa-australia.org/news/waronschools.html>

Special offer for RAWA supporters

WineRaiser is a wine retailer who offers premium Australian wines through mail order. SAWA entered into an agreement with WineRaiser that 20% of every wine purchase made will go to SAWA in support our work for Afghan girls. So if you were planning to get a dozen of some good wine get your wines from WineRaiser and help Naseema Shaheed High School with 20% of the purchase price.

Ordering is easy. You can go to WineRaiser's web page (<http://www.wineraiser.org/purchase>), make your selection and place your order online. You can also fax your order to (03) 9428 8324, place your order by phone on (03) 9428 8323 or visit WineRaiser at 196 Church Street Richmond, Melbourne. Don't forget to specify "SAWA" in your order when asked to "Choose your Fundraiser."

Suggested reading (part 2, to be continued)

The Kite Runner The first novel by Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-American, tells the story of an unlikely friendship between Amir, the son of a wealthy businessman and a Sunni, and Hassan, the son of his father's servant and a Shi'a. "Unforgettable...extraordinary. It is so powerful that for a long time after, everything I read seemed bland." (Isabel Allende)

Parvanaby Deborah Ellis. A realistic story suitable for teenagers/young adults. Parvana is an 11 year old girl whose father is imprisoned. The only option for her family is for Parvana to dress as a boy and take on her father's role as provider.

*Parvana's Journey*by Deborah Ellis. The sequel to Parvana yet it stands alone. It gives a realistic picture of the horrifying effects of war on children. Reading age 9-12 years.

*The Carpet Wars*by award-winning Australian author and journalist Christopher Kremmer. A fascinating insight into the historical and cultural traditions of the Islamic heartlands.

Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM will be held in Adelaide on 22 February 2007. SAWA members receive an invitation and proxy form with this newsletter. If you are a financial member and did not receive the invitation and form please email info@sawa-australia.org or write to the SAWA PO box address.

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