



From the Editor

The United States and its allies are preparing the withdrawal of their troops from Afghanistan. What will the situation be for the women of the country when the occupation forces have left? The warlords will no longer have direct western military support but will do everything to keep their grip on power. It is not a time to leave the women of Afghanistan alone in their struggle. We have to force our government to abandon its support for warlords and focus on support for women. SAWA supports Amnesty International's campaign to put pressure on Canberra and urges everyone to sign the petition and support local activities. But we cannot place our trust in our government and hope for the best, we have to keep up our work for the courageous women who give hope to so many of their oppressed sisters, defying danger every day. We cannot become slack in our effort. Donations are needed more than ever.

Matthias Tomczak

US protection produces a new warlord

Preaching his anti-Taliban credentials, Hakim Shujoyi has enlisted the protection of US forces. But locals say he is a brutal killer whose men rape and rob their way through parts of Oruzgan.

Accounts of his treatment of Pashtun villagers are appalling. It is said he favours the use of rape as a weapon.

As a minority Hazara, Shujoyi ordinarily might be expected to step gingerly around the majority Pashtuns, but a reputation as a fearless "Taliban hunter" has earned enough US military protection for him to cast himself as a new warlord – even as the Americans were backing him into the leadership of a new grassroots community protection service, the Afghan Local Police or ALP.

Shujoyi enjoys a second layer of valuable insurance. Shielding him from official pursuit and prosecution are fellow Hazaras who hold senior positions in the Karzai government – in particular vice president Mohammad Karim Khalili.

American officials issue repeated denials. But in the space of a month government officials and MPs in Kabul, Oruzgan police chief Matiullah Khan, a respected NGO, influential Oruzgani tribal elders, local businessmen and humanitarian workers cross-reference repeated claims of how cover by US Special Forces has emboldened and protected Shujoyi.

The head of the national parliament's complaints commission, Haji Obaidullah Barakzai, says he has referred more than 120 formal complaints against Shujoyi and his men to various arms of the national security and legal apparatus.

"We summons the Interior Minister – he always says that Shujoyi will be arrested in the next week or so," Obaidullah says in an interview at his Kabul home. "The Americans give Shujoyi a position, so he goes and kills 18 people in the one family – 12 of them women," Obaidullah alleges. "He rapes, he kills the old and the young. His men steal money, cars and motorbikes. Shujoyi participates in gang rape and robbery. One of the reasons the people so dislike the Americans is that they breed killers like Shujoyi."

Sydney Morning Herald 19 March 2013
see also www.sawa-australia.org/news.html

Note: The Australian troops are based in Oruzgan province.

Rashid Dostum, a law unto himself

Abdul Rashid Dostum may not be the most loathsome of warlords but a warlord nevertheless, and while his history may not be typical, his current behaviour definitely is.

Dostum began his career after the fall of the monarchy in 1973 as a union official in the oilfields of the north-west, where he was involved in setting up armed groups "to defend the revolution." He built up a militia of 20,000 men and supported the Soviet occupation during the 1980s. During the Civil war of 1992 – 1996 he participated in the destruction of Kabul, building alliances with other warlords but changing allegiances as his fortunes rose and fell. During the reign of the Taliban he joined the "Northern Alliance" and became a major ally for the US invasion. When Hamid Karzai was installed to power he became deputy defense minister. He now controls his own area in Afghanistan's north and is Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff.



Rashid Dostum's swimming pool in his villa, built with US aid money and inaugurated in 2002 with members of U.S. Special Operations Forces in a midnight swim

Here is a news item from Reuters of 15 April 2013:

How do you collect a \$200,000 electricity bill from an Afghan warlord? Try cutting him off from the grid. Then turn off your cell phone so he can't yell at you.

General Rashid Dostum - one of Afghanistan's most powerful militia leaders - found someone else to reconnect him within hours, said Mirwais Alami, the chief commercial officer at Afghanistan's national power company.

"This will take years to collect," Alami said wryly. "But I am determined. If he doesn't pay, his son will pay."

Sign the Amnesty International petition!

Amnesty International is embarking on a major campaign to make women's rights a central issue during the troop withdrawal process. A key element of the campaign is an online petition that addresses the government and all political parties. The following is the text issued by Amnesty International in support of the petition.

Afghanistan is one of the worst places in the world to be a woman. Girls' schools are frequently attacked, high-profile women's rights activists have been killed, and violence against girls and women continues to be a major problem.

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, there has been significant progress in women's rights. But these steps forward are threatened by the current peace and reconciliation talks between the Taliban, Afghan and US governments, in the context of this year's withdrawal from Afghanistan of most of the international security forces - including Australia's.

Stand with women in Afghanistan

Afghan women are fighting for a better future. Your signature can help them to do that. Amnesty International is calling for the Australian government, the international community and the Afghan Government to protect girls' and women's human rights and ensure women are central to the reconciliation and peace talks.

Petition text:

I stand with Amnesty International and call on Australia, the international community and the Afghan Government to ensure women are central to peace and reconciliation negotiations, have meaningful political representation, have strengthened capacity in public life and have their safety and human rights protected.

I call on all Australian parties to commit to progressing the status of women and girls in Afghanistan in their 2013 Federal Election Foreign Policies.

SAWA urges all supporters to sign the petition at

http://www.amnesty.org.au/action/action/31089/?utm_medium=email-sf&utm_source=1304afgnwmn&utm_content=link2

Readers without private email should take this SAWAN to their local library and ask for help to access the given web location.

International Women's Day

As every year our thoughts went again to our courageous sisters in Kabul and Rawalpindi on International Women's Day. SAWA (SA) secretary Christine Gamble sent this message of support to OPAWC director Latifa Ahmady:

IWD 2012 Message of Solidarity for OPAWC

2012 has been a year of much success for OPAWC. SAWA-Australia (SA) is proud to hear of the high regard in which the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul is held by the government and all women who attend its classes. OPAWC's Vocational Training Centre stands as a model for the Afghan women and a beacon of hope for their families.

SAWA-Australia (SA) is very happy to hear that the Hamoon Health Clinic in Farah province has been registered with the government and hopes that it can contribute to its support in the future.

The year 2013 will bring an uncertain future and more struggle for the rights of women. SAWA-Australia (SA) has no doubt that OPAWC will continue to have success with its work and wishes everyone at OPAWC a satisfying and safe year ahead.

Best regards, Christine

Christine was also asked to speak to the International Women's Day assembly at Mitcham Girls High School in Adelaide.

Two Trees: a progress report



We are pleased to report that our art book *Two Trees* is at the printer and will be available at our online shop www.sawa-australia.org/products and any bookshop in June.

On the same day, Friday 8 March, students and staff at Hewad High School in Rawalpindi organized a colourful and uplifting ceremony:



Some photos from the IWD celebration at Hewad High School

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The regional groups in Melbourne, WA, Tasmania, Victoria, Queensland, the Riverina and Northern Rivers are affiliated with SAWA Australia (SA) and contribute to the support for the Vocational Training Centre and Hamoon Clinic.

Thank you that you thought of us

SAWA supporter Dr. Jennifer Ann Burley passed away in February. Jennifer attended fundraising choir concerts and was always prepared to help. Before she died she instructed her family to ask for donations for SAWA in lieu of flowers. We thank her family and those who followed Jennifer's wish for their support.

Hamoon Clinic: sorrow and hope

Hamoon Clinic is one of SAWA (SA)'s support project (although our support is very small compared with the support given by the Clinic's main sponsor Planet Wheeler, who has just allocated another \$19,000 for equipment and running costs for the next six months). On 6 April we received this email from Latifa Ahamady, the director of OPAWC:

Dear Supporters of Hamoon and other friends, hope you are fine.

There was a awful attack in Farah province on 3rd of April, it was started early in the morning and was end at 5 P.M . There were 8 insurgents who attacked on main branches of the government.

Hamoon Clinic was not that much far as it is located in 4 districts but the attacks were in district 1-2-3. But by chance it is okay.

Among personnel of the clinic: Two of my relatives and uncle of our Administrator have been killed, and our Nurse Nargis Abdul Rashid has been injured, she has been shifted to Herat for treatment by OPAWC support.

It was a harsh attack that led to the death of 60 people, of which 12 are from the government while the others are ordinary citizens of Farah. 100 people, all civilians, are seriously injured and more than 300 are injured but their condition is satisfactory.

The insurgents want to stop us from what we are doing but they don't know that these attacks make us more angry to work as hard as possible.

Sorry to tell you about this harsh event but I wanted you to know the condition under which we are struggling.

Best Regards, Latifa

If you want to help the Clinic at this difficult time with a financial contribution you can make a donation to assist the nurse at <http://www.givenow.com.au/sawadoctorsforhamoonclinic>

The migrating tribes of Khuzistan

For thousands of years the Bakhtiari tribes of south-west Iran have moved their millions of sheep, goats and horses between their summer and winter pastures. On 29 April SAWA (SA) showed a documentary of their eight week journey across 300 km of rivers, ravines and snowy mountains. The audience was fascinated and impressed by the resilience of the people, who continue to live as their ancestors did 5,000 years ago. The event raised over \$600 for the Vocational Training Centre.

Amnesty International action in Adelaide

Afghan women's rights: book club, films and posters. 22 May 6 pm, Action Centre, Ground Floor 14 Grote Street, Adelaide, SA, 5000
Contact Sue Herbert (herbert@chariot.net.au) for details.

Bowling for Afghanistan in Perth and Adelaide

The second annual *Bowling for Afghanistan* was held in Perth on Sunday 7th April 2013. Under a sunny blue sky, after the forecast of rain failed to eventuate, 90 people in 18 teams battled it out for the "SAWA Cup" at the East Fremantle Bowling Club in W.A. Don and Bob, able and willing bowlers from the Club, were on hand to assist with advice and bar sales. Over a hundred people turned up, mostly bowlers, some as moral support. In a closely contested battle, the final winning Team was decided by a toss of the coin to separate two Teams on the same score. "Team G" took home the Cup.

A plentiful and sumptuous afternoon tea was enjoyed by all, and the afternoon was considered a great social success by SAWA supporters and the bowling club alike! And - we raised a whopping \$1421.25!



The winning team in Perth with its SAWA bowling trophy.

Two days later, on Tuesday 9 April, Adelaide held its first *Bowling for Afghanistan* event. Overawed but not daunted by Perth's success, 22 people came together, from which we could build 4 teams. The Soroptimist International of Adelaide team (know as the "Team with Potential") beat the others hands down and took Adelaide's SAWA Cup home. The team captain said after the event: "We had great fun and enjoyed meeting the other participants. Winning the trophy was certainly not in our plans. We owed a lot to Cheryl from the other team, who was generous with her knowledge and patience; also, the two kind gentlemen who mentored us. Thanks again for a really good night and hope you will hold the event again next year." Of course we will! We raised \$350 for the Vocational Training Centre.



The "Team with Potential": Jason and Lesley Jaensch, Pam Lacey and Denise Winter



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Convenor: Dawn Atkinson **Assistant Convenor:** Shirley Allen **Secretary:** Margaret Hetherton

Treasurer: Carolyn Allen

Committee: Maryellen Galbally, June Lunsmann, Susan Martin, Helen Toner. **Public Officer:** Deanna Fekete

Courage to Protect Women's Rights in Afghanistan

SAWA-NSW has met Afghan women of amazing courage. This growing band advocate for women's rights and build support, social welfare and protection organisations for women thus risking their lives to organise and speak out. Some have been elected to Parliament. Others have been assassinated. In February we met one of these leaders, Wazhma Frogh who received the **2009 International Woman of Courage Award**.

From a school for Afghan Refugees in a camp in Pakistan, Wazhma gained entrance to University and eventually graduated in Law from Warwick University. For the past 15 years she has devoted herself to the mobilisation of social change to benefit Afghan women. In 2010 she became Co-founder & Executive Officer of Women, Peace and Security Research Institute in Afghanistan. This is a first for representing women's views on key national issues of education, development, peace and security.

Wazhma recently led a delegation to visit President Kazai to present a number of issues: the dire poverty of the 2.5 million Afghan widows (the highest proportion per capita in the world) who face cultural barriers to earning and critical concerns about women in the peace process. Highlighted by the delegation was the very large number of angry young men, who cannot find a productive role in war torn Afghanistan and who are often unwitting collaborators with Taliban violence. The delegation argued that the causes of their anger need to be addressed. President Kazai appeared receptive of this perspective, of the value of women's efforts in women's refuges and rights education and of the need to safeguard recent advances in women's rights and education.

Ms Frogh was one of eight eminent Afghan delegates who attended a round table discussion hosted by the **Afghan Australian Development Organisation** in Melbourne and involving 50 participants with an active involvement in Afghanistan—Australian NGOs, public sector, Afghan diaspora and academia. Over two days an initial brief was formulated guided by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security which was then presented to the Australian Government on 14th February 2013. Through the UN, these objectives will also be presented to other governments involved in Afghanistan.

Australia has a role in ensuring that the status of women and girls achieved in the last decade in Afghanistan is not lost during the current reconciliation talks with the Taliban, Afghan and USA Governments during the transition and post 2014.

On what we can do:

Ms Frogh requested that we publicise these issues, talk to politicians here and support the efforts of Afghan women leaders to maintain the rights already won – for education, legal protection, and welfare and for representation in Parliament.

We can also continue to fund projects for Afghan women. It is instructive that Wazhma herself was educated by a refugee school in Pakistan - one like Hewad School which we in SAWA-NSW are currently supporting.

Amnesty International and Action Aid are two organisations informing people in Australia about the danger that Afghan women will lose the benefits they have gained unless these advances are enshrined in the Peace Negotiations around the departure of Allied troops.

For further information www.sawansw.org.au

Recent Events

Birthing Kit Day

Over 50 women met at Leichhardt Rowing Club on 4 March to assemble 1000 birthing kits. It was a convivial, energetic morning, underpinned by the understanding that each kit may save the life of a baby and mother in rural Afghanistan by providing a clean, sterile environment for birth. SAWA-NSW sends big thank you to the wonderful cooks who donated a very special morning tea, to those who paid for the kits (\$3.00 each) and those who gave their time to assemble them.

Artists for Afghan Aid 7-9 February

This art show raised almost \$10,000. Thank you to: artists who fully donated their works, Dorothy Hoddinott AO, Principal Holroyd High School, who opened the show with a wonderful account of the achievements of Afghan refugee students; buyers and especially artist Carole Griffin, June Lunsmann, graphic designer, Claire Pickard and all who rallied behind them.

Coming Events

MAY Wednesday 8th 12 for 12.30: Lunch at Bamiyan Afghan Restaurant, 175 First Ave, Five Dock Bookings 9810 9093

JUNE Film night details to be announced

JULY Degustation Dinner and Silent Auction

*Action on the birthing kit day March 2013
Photo courtesy Jenny Templin Photography.*

