



From the Editor

Another year is upon us. In Afghanistan the people will suffer under corrupt governors, the Taliban and independent warlords. Progressive forces will continue their struggle for a democratic Afghanistan and receive increasing support from mass demonstrations. The involvement of women will increase as we help them to free themselves from the limitations of the old society. But it will be a long struggle, and our support will remain crucial.

Matthias Tomczak

Tens of thousands demonstrate in Kabul

On 11 November Kabul saw more than 10,000 people in the streets protesting against the killing of 7 Hazaras, including two women and a child who had been held hostage for weeks. Members of all ethnic groups joined in the protest against a dysfunctional government that does not care about security in the provinces. 10 people were wounded when guards fired shots outside the presidential palace.



Similar demonstrations were organised in other cities, including Nangarhar, and even Zabul, where the Harazas were killed.

Witnesses say that this is the beginning of a new phase in the politics of Afghanistan. The people have become politically alert, and confrontation with the corrupt and inept politicians will increase.

In Kabul the demonstrators marched 10 km to the palace, bearing the green-draped coffins of the dead, chanting "Death to (president) Ghani, death to (chief executive) Abdullah, death to Taliban" and demanding the president come out to face them with a response.

"The only way to prevent such crimes in the future is to take over all government offices until they wake up and make a decision," said one of the demonstrators. A woman said: "They've now started killing women and children. It can be me tomorrow, can be my children. This protest is historic and we are adamant to not back off until something is done about this. We've had enough."

Abdul Rauf Ibrahim, speaker of the lower house, said: "This issue doesn't belong to a family, a tribe or an ethnic group, but it belongs to all Afghans."

US-based writer and journalist Noorjahan Akbar, who co-founded the *Afghan Young Women for Change* organisation and travels to Afghanistan regularly, also notes the change from 2013 to 2015 and says that the increasing participation of women

in the protests sparks hope among many as a sign of progress and the country's unity against terrorism.

Not all donations reach their destinations

"One million dollars in charity donations left forgotten in government coffers" was a headline in the Sydney Morning Herald of 13 December. Australia's leading charities and not-for-profit organisations have had \$500,000 in funds transferred into government coffers because they left them untouched in bank accounts for too long.

Fairfax Media searched for the "lost money" of 30 charities, not-for-profits and hospitals - seized by state and federal governments under unclaimed money laws. The Salvation Army, Australian Red Cross and St John Ambulance accounted for 40 per cent of the \$495,300 in unclaimed charitable money Fairfax Media found.

Federal and state governments can take possession of money in the form of bank accounts, company shares, un-presented cheques, and so on, if it lies dormant for seven years, and regard it as revenue.

With 54,000 charities registered with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission, the amount of lost charity dollars could be far greater than found by Fairfax Media. Rob Edwards, chief executive of Fundraising Institute of Australia, said that it is "likely that a committee has run out of motivated members to transfer operations or to wind up" and forgotten some accounts.

An investigation of the Institute of Community Directors Australia published in December found that the majority of not-for-profit organisations find it difficult to recruit a suitable person to manage the organization's financial affairs and that many treasurers have relatively short tenures.

[Sydney Morning Herald 13 December 2015](http://www.smh.com.au)

SAWA-Australia (SA) is fortunate to have a volunteer treasurer who has been looking after the organization's finances for over 5 years and keeps our accounts in perfect order. Our donors can rest assured that every cent of their donations reaches Afghanistan.



This painting by Elizabeth Butler known as *The remnants of an army* (1879), currently on display at the Tate Gallery in London, shows the sole survivor of Britain's retreat from Kabul in 1842. It was the most disastrous defeat of British forces in many decades of armed conflict with the Afghans. Today foreign forces still try to secure the interests of imperial powers through proxy armies paid and armed by them.

US troops gone, but CIA operations continue

"Armed men had arrived at Darwar Khan's house. 'When my father opened the gate, they shot him dead,' recalled Khan, who was inside the house at the time. 'Then, they tossed a grenade into the compound, killing my mother.' His father was a farmer. His mother was a homemaker. It was not the first time the fighters had killed civilians in this strategic region. And it wouldn't be the last allegation of wrongdoing."

This is not a report about another Taliban atrocity. According to an article in the Washington Post, the perpetrators were part of the Khost Protection Force (KPF), an Afghan paramilitary unit run by the CIA near the border to Pakistan, a three hour drive from Kabul.

The KPF is just one of many militias officially operating in coordination with the national defence forces but in reality acting outside normal chains of command and unaccountable to provincial governments. What makes the KPF special is the fact that it is one of several paramilitary forces created by the CIA after the 9/11 attacks and continues to operate directly under CIA control, who pays its salaries (\$400 a month, twice what a soldier in the Afghan security forces earns) and regards it "one of the most effective elements fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan".

The CIA is not bound by the Bilateral Security Agreement between Afghanistan and Washington that limits the ability of US military forces to enter Afghan homes. On the night they killed Khan's parents, Khan recalled, men outside the compound were yelling in English, indicating direct CIA involvement. The target of the raid was Khan's uncle, who lived next door, who allegedly bought and sold Kalashnikov rifles. He was handcuffed and taken away. His family does not know his whereabouts and has no contact with him. He has not been charged with any crime, and he does not have a lawyer.



In November, after another night raid in which the KPF killed two people, hundreds of angry villagers took to the streets of Khost city. "Death to Americans," they chanted. "Death to American slaves."

[Washington Post 3 December 2015](#)

More screenings of the documentary *Frame by Frame*

The last three months saw successful screenings in Perth, Hobart, Melbourne and Adelaide of the documentary *Frame by Frame* about the life and work of four Afghan photographers that raised a total of over \$5,100. The movie resonated with the audience everywhere, and further screenings are planned. In Tasmania the movie has already been shown a second time, raising an additional \$276. In **Perth** it will be shown again by the Westcoast Community Centre on Tuesday 23 February 2016 at 10 am in the Grove Library, 1 Leake Street, Peppermint Grove. In **Sydney** SAWA (NSW) will screen the movie at the Mechanics' School of Art, 280 Pitt Street, on 11 February at 5 pm. In **Adelaide** a screening is arranged as part of Harmony Week at the Port Adelaide library on Saturday 19 March at 1.30 pm.

In **Murwillumbah** the movie will be shown at the Regent Cinema on Wednesday 6 April at 6pm. A screening for **Canberra** is planned. The latest information on these and other screenings can be found on the local group pages of the [SAWA \(SA\) website](#).

Introducing HAWCA, legal aid for women

There are many charities and NGOs active in Afghanistan. Most deliver relief from poverty and provide training in various fields. SAWA-Australia (SA)'s partner organizations do that as well but do not confine themselves to social support. They belong to a group of democratic organizations that aim to move Afghanistan towards a society free of fundamentalism and tribal conflict, a democratic society with equal rights for men and women and all ethnic groups. These organizations work closely together, and it is instructive for our supporters to know who they are and what they do.

OPAWC, the Organization for Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities, is already well known as the operator of SAWA (SA)'s main support project the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul and Hamoon Clinic in Farah. AFCECO, the Afghan Child Education and Care Organization, runs the foster havens from where the students were raised who are supported by SAWA (SA) members. (We introduced AFCECO in [SAWAN 34](#) of April 2012.) Both are registered NGOs in Afghanistan.

On the political front the democratic movement is represented by the Solidarity Party (Hambastaghi), who we introduced in [SAWAN 44](#) of November 2014. In this edition we want to introduce HAWCA, the Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan. HAWCA was established in January 1999 by a group of young Afghan women and men. As part of a range of activities it keeps a strong focus on legal aid and education about individual legal rights. It operates legal aid centres in Kabul, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif.

Members of HAWCA have given workshops and seminars for the women at OPAWC's Vocational Training Centre, thus extending the purpose of the literacy courses into areas of family law, domestic violence law and under-age marriage law. Following the establishment of the joint women's committee of the Centre with the Afshar district Community Development Council Committees, HAWCA now regularly assists the committee with legal matters, covering the Elimination of Violence against Women (ECAW) Law, women rights in Islam and in Afghanistan's constitution and all the other relevant national and international laws.

The district committees consist of men and women and meet every fortnight to discuss the hot issues in the area. A special time is given to the issues of violence against women cases where the cases are discussed and resolved, with HAWCA and a defence lawyer taking over any case concerned with violence against women. Every case is first registered for mediation; if it is not solved through mediation it is followed up in the court.

SAWA would gladly contribute to the financial support of HAWCA, but our donation income is limited, and we have to concentrate on our support for OPAWC and AFCECO; but we wish HAWCA every success with its important work!



The HAWCA legal aid centre in Mazar-i-Sharif



SAWA-Australia (SA)

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Patron: Penny Wright, previously SA Senator and member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights

Partner NGOs: **OPAWC** (Organization for Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities), **AFCECO** (Afghan Child Education and Care Organization)

New SAWA (SA) greeting cards

The 2015 Christmas raffle was drawn on 23 December. The lucky winners are Meredith Perry (Lockleys SA, 1st prize), Kerry Anderson (Semaphore Park SA, 2nd prize), Peter Barnes (Brompton SA, 3rd prize and David Oates (Cherry Gardens SA, 4th prize).

The quilt generously donated as first prize for our raffle is a real piece of art, made by award winning quilt maker Prue Wheel. The committee had a hard time to part with it and suggested that it could form the basis for new greeting cards. Prue very kindly gave us permission to use her work, so we now have "the art collection", a set of nine beautiful greeting cards, for sale. They are available from the online [SAWA shop](#), or you can order them through the mail. Cards with envelope cost \$3, or \$2.75 for orders of 9 or more cards.



On the reverse the cards have the text "A scene from the quilt *Midnight Fantasy* donated to SAWA-Australia (SA) by multi-award winning quilt maker Prue Wheel. The proceeds from this card contribute to the operation of a teaching centre for illiterate women in Afghanistan."

Cancelled Adelaide concert now set for April

In December SAWA (SA) had planned a concert of chamber music. Unfortunately the week preceding the concert was unusually hot (the hottest December week since records are kept, with temperatures consistently above 40°C) and Flinders Street Baptist Church became too hot to hold a concert, so the concert had to be cancelled.



The nine musicians have generously offered to reschedule the concert. It will now be held on **Sunday 3 April at 2.30 pm** at Flinders Street Baptist Church. More information and tickets can be found online at <http://www.sawa-australia.org/index.php/shop/tickets-to-events#adelaide>. Tickets are also available at the door.

Sponsored students in 2016

In the coming year SAWA (SA) members will sponsor six students from AFCECO's foster homes:



Zarina (left) is enrolled at the Department of Sculpture of Kabul University and wants to become an artist. In her foster house she is the head of the Educational Team, deals with the teachers and makes sure that they come regularly and that the students attend the classes.

Pashtana (centre) should have finished her two year course in Management in 2015, but the private tertiary institution she attended lost its certification and Pashtana now has to study for another year to finish her Major in Management in 2016. She works as Administration Officer in charge of preparing payrolls. She also organizes and records meetings and works as assistant to AFCECO director Andeisha Farid.

Barakat (right) is enrolled in a Bachelor of Law degree at the Gharjistan Institute of Higher Education. He works at AFCECO's main office in Kabul and is also the transport manager.



Rima (left) is enrolled for a Major in Dentistry at the Raazi Health Care Institute. She works as assistant to AFCECO's Health Manager, taking children to doctors and solving health issues at the orphanage.

Hajira (centre) is also enrolled for a Major in Dentistry at the Raazi Health Care Institute. She works at Mehan orphanage assisting the communication team, organizing video calls between the children and their sponsors. Hajira and Rima have become good friends during their studies.

Mursal (right) is in the same situation like Pashtana and has to continue her Major in Management for 2016. She works as Inventory Officer and manages the stocks of several orphanages. She is also a member of the AFCECO soccer team that won the Champion Trophy among 18 teams in Kabul in 2012.

While the university fees of all six students are taken care of by our generous sponsors, some still require support for their living expenses. There are also other students from AFCECO's foster havens who have already entered tertiary studies and require support. If you wish to sponsor one of them please see them on our [student sponsorship page](#).



SOCIAL CHANGE IN AFGHANISTAN

A recent article by Shaharзад Akbar on the webpage of *Open Society in Afghanistan*, gives insight into the political and social significance of a new social change in Afghanistan.

That change is the deep penetration of mobile phones. In a population of a little over 32 million people in 2015, more than 18 million are mobile phone users. Hence over 50 percent of the population are potentially able to be reached by informal social networks. For a country with virtually no mobile network before the US invasion this is a remarkable change.

During her childhood Miss Akbar, risked her life to learn to read and write, knowing that if caught by the Taliban, she would be punished severely. As the first Afghan born and raised woman to study at Oxford University her risk taking has been well recognised. Now as Director of *Open Society in Afghanistan* she has a mission to lead a peaceful, non-sectarian movement for social justice - for improved lives for women (and men) in her country.

Her first-hand account of the largest peaceful protest in Kabul's recent history in November 2015, against the beheading of seven innocent Hazaras including a nine-year old girl, is illuminating in relation to the social changes taking place. Not only was the protest replicated in other centres in Afghanistan but the protesters were received in person by the President of Afghanistan.

Shaharзад writes "As a woman among the protesters, I felt absolutely safe, which is not how I feel on an average day in Kabul. Crowds of men gave way to women as we moved through the streets. Religious scholars and secular activists marched side by side. The usual divisions—urban and rural, secular and religious, old and young, male and female—melted away in the march."

She gives credit for the organisation and peacefulness of the protest to the hundreds of young male and female volunteers, who provided leadership in organising peaceful protest, among them being the young journalists who had gone sleepless for 48 hours, providing continuous world coverage.

Shaharзад believes that "the protests reinstalled a sense of hope and self-confidence in the Afghan people [who] are capable of

organizing a peaceful demonstration dealing with the most difficult and painful issues of this country. We are capable of saying no, loud and clear, to terrorism despite the ongoing violence. Our government might fail us, but we will not fail each other."

Here we are hearing a brave new voice in this troubled country!

TENTH ANNUAL SAWA LUNCH

High Tea at lunchtime was enjoyed by 55 members and supporters at Balmain's historic Clontarf Cottage on 19th November 2015. There were many positive comments on the enjoyable event. The house and garden setting was enhanced by small table groups and elegant bone china reminiscent of a past generation. Delicious sandwiches, fruit platters and spectacular cakes made by members, complemented donated champagne and tea and coffee. A good profit of over \$2,000 resulted.

Thank you Leichhardt Council for waiving the fee for the use of this wonderful venue.

DATES FOR DIARY Also see our website and Facebook page

- **Film "Frame by Frame"**, an excellent documentary on conditions in Afghanistan - **Thursday 11th February, 5 to 7 PM** at the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street between Park and Bathurst Streets - \$20.00 entrance. Refreshments will be served before the film starts at 5.30pm. This venue is a few minutes' walk from the QVB and Town Hall Station and also will allow people working in the city to arrive in time for the film. Book as per invitation or ring 0425 718 966
- **Annual Birthing Kit Assembly Morning: Monday, 7 March 2016 9.30 for 10.00am** at the Leichhardt Rowing Club, 62 Glover St Leichhardt. Many of our members relish this annual opportunity to assemble these simple kits knowing they can save the lives of mothers and babies. Morning tea and cake on the veranda overlooking Iron Cove Bay is an added inducement! This is a free event but if people want to donate \$3.00 (or multiples of that) to cover the cost of each kit, SAWA-NSW will be delighted. For some years we have found it difficult to cover the \$3,000 we need for the 1000 kits we assemble each year. Book as per invitation or ring 9818 5319
- **Dinner May** date TBA at Bamiyan Restaurant, 175 First Ave, Five Dock .



Enjoying lunch inside and the sales table outside at Clontarf Cottage. Photos courtesy Margaret Bailey.

