

Hope died in Afghanistan

The Brussels Times

Tuesday, 24 August 2021

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Zainab, a 27-year-old Hazara woman from Bamiyan, Afghanistan gave birth to her first baby in a Kabul maternity clinic run by [Doctors Without Borders](#).

She joyfully named her baby Omid, “Hope” in Dari. Her mother-in-law, [Muhammadi explained](#), “We gave him the name Omid. Hope for a better future, hope for a better Afghanistan, and hope for a mother who has been struggling to have a child for years.”

Four hours after Omid’s birth, three gunmen disguised as police opened fire in the maternity ward, murdering sixteen mothers, two newborns, and a Doctors Without Borders midwife. Omid lay dead on the floor covered in blood.

Muhammadi wept, “I brought my daughter-in-law to Kabul so she would not lose her baby. Today we’ll take his dead body to Bamiyan.”

[This May](#) in the same Hazara neighborhood, Dasht-e-Barchi, 85 schoolgirls were murdered in a triple bombing as they left the Syed Al-Shahada school. Most of them were Hazaras.

Since 2015, Islamist terrorist attacks have killed [at least 1,200 Hazaras](#). The attacks deliberately target their hospitals and children. These are war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Because they are intended to destroy a substantial part of the Hazara ethnic and religious group, they are also acts of genocide.

The Taliban have [“kill lists”](#) with names of Afghans who oppose them. The “kill lists” are posted online.

One ethnic and religious group has been on the Taliban’s “kill list” since the 1990’s: the Hazaras.

The Hazaras live in central Afghanistan around Bamiyan, the place where the Taliban notoriously blew up two huge Buddhas carved into the face of a cliff.

The Hazaras were victims of genocide under the Iron Emir, Abdur Rahman Khan, in 1888-1893, when they resisted his consolidation of Afghanistan. [Over half of the Hazara population died](#). The Hazaras are again in grave peril of genocide.

The Taliban targeted the Hazara minority when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan. They will do so again. This time, the Islamic State – Khorasan Province (IS-KP) will join in the genocide.

The Taliban and IS-KP are Sunni Muslims and the Hazaras are Shia Muslims. The Taliban and IS-KP condemn Hazaras as heretics. The punishment for heresy is death.

The Hazaras are ethnically distinct from other Afghans. They speak their own dialect of Dari.

The coming Hazara genocide in Afghanistan is preventable. The U.S. and NATO must warn the Taliban that if the Taliban or IS-KP commit any more massacres against the Hazara or any other ethnic group, U.S. and NATO forces will return to protect them.

Press reports from Afghanistan portray the Afghan conflict as a “forever civil war.” The “conventional wisdom” is that America should stay out of civil wars. This isolationist “wisdom” ignores the fact that most genocides occur during civil wars. It assumes that civil wars cannot be won with support for local forces opposed to tyranny.

If we ignore the clear warnings of the coming Hazara genocide with apathy, we will abandon our moral duty to people who have loyally supported Americans for twenty years. America will again become a Bystander to genocide.

If we abandon Afghanistan, we will forget the horror of Khmer Rouge Cambodia, a nation we also abandoned.

I was one of the first Americans to live in Cambodia in 1980 after Vietnam defeated the Khmer Rouge. One of the first to walk through the mass graves. Among the first to listen to the survivors.

I will never forget a woman named Gai Maryam, who asked me, “Why did you abandon us?”

I didn’t have a good answer.

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This article was prepared with research assistance from Krista Jones*

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