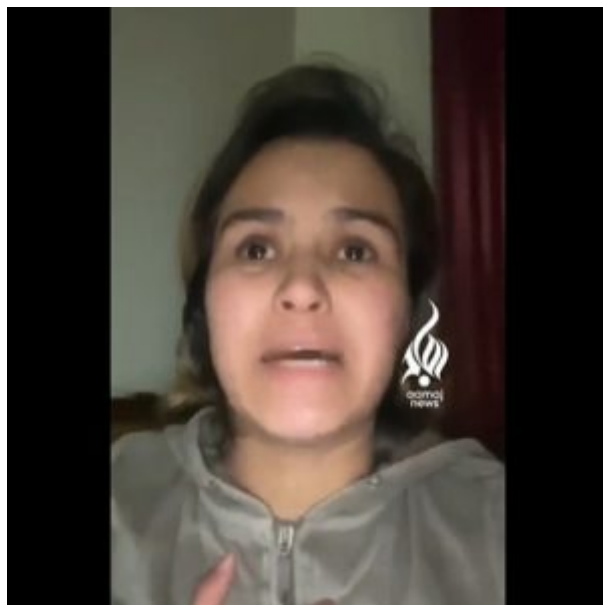


Afghan Feminists Torture-Murdered, President Biden Unconcerned



by Phyllis Chesler

At all hours of the day and night, Afghan women tell me tales of horror. One woman's rights activist translates an article for me to which she adds her own comments.

"The Taliban have assassinated 15 women's rights activists in Balkh," she says. "In just one month, the bodies of 15 women have been transferred to the Abu Ali Sina Balkhi District Hospital in Mazar-i-Sharif. International organizations have blamed the Taliban for these killings. Women are being tortured and raped! Dozens of women have been taken hostage by this terrorist group. Do not forget all the women by repeating only two or three names."

I cannot find any mainstream media coverage of the torture-murders of these 15 innocents. In addition, at least six women who participated in a Kabul protest last month have been abducted. The United Nations has [called upon](#) the Taliban "to

take all possible measures to ensure their safe and immediate release, and to hold those responsible to account.” A Taliban spokesman “denied that any were being held,” the Voice of America reported. But then he contradicted himself and said authorities had the right “to arrest and detain dissidents or those who break the law.”

A state-run Turkish network, TRT, [reports](#) that the Taliban is in the process of removing “bad people” from its ranks.

Tamana Paryani [recorded a video](#) showing her screaming as the Taliban tried to take her. Another woman, Parwana Embrahimkhel, was similarly abducted from her home.

According to the Afghan women I hear from, these women have not been seen since.

Both women participated in a Kabul protest decrying Taliban oppression.

“Stop arresting and killing innocent women,” protesters [reportedly](#) chanted. “Freedom, education, and working rights.”

There are others – many others.

The women’s rights activists who are hiding in their homes and with whom I remain in touch are telling me about similar disappearances. For example, one Afghan woman tells me:

“The Taliban arrested woman’s right activist Mursal Ayar from her house. Her mother said that the Taliban got Mursal’s name from another feminist whom they tortured, then came and attacked Mursal’s house, beat her in front of her family and neighbors and then took her away.”

Mursal attended the same Kabul protest. “The lives of women in Afghanistan have become very tough ... Our only option is to raise our voice even if it endangers our lives,” she [told La Prensa Latina](#) before disappearing.

Is it really possible that no feminist groups have been effective in calling for the release of Afghan women? Their educations, careers, and mind-set are entirely due to feminist ideas, American policies, and Western military boots on the ground. The [National Organization for Women](#) has done nothing and, while [the Feminist Majority](#) does have an article about Afghan women at risk, it does not specifically call on President Biden to demand the release of jailed women or for their evacuation.

To the best of my knowledge, no large organization has launched a campaign to free and evacuate such endangered women.

The Turkish venue, TRT, [quotes](#) Human Rights Watch, which has noted “that these arrests represent a frightening escalation in the Taliban’s crackdown on the women’s rights movement.”

Huda Khamosh, a well-known Afghan feminist, stood up at a recent closed-door meeting with the Taliban in Norway and demanded the “release” of the missing women. [According to Business Insider](#), the Taliban leaders were taken aback, calling the women “puppets of the West.”

Those women, their families, their dissident and gay male counterparts, who have so far been evacuated and/or who are still being fed – owe their escapes and their sustenance to [Western governments](#) – but also to determined individual civilians, ex-Army, and religious groups who have been bucking government obstacles. This is a tale for another day.

Yet again, a woman asks whether there “are any evacuations possible? Are any countries willing to take us? We are all very worried. Every moment of the day and night passes with fear.”

I heard from one Afghan woman Wednesday, who notes: “Afghanistan is NOT SAFE for Afghan women activists and the Taliban are shouting every day that [they] have the right to

destroy the people who are against us.”

On whose watch did we choose to leave such women and their families behind? Women who speak English, are educated, have careers, who worked with American, Canadian, and European organizations in Afghanistan – and who would be most likely to assimilate into the West?

According to journalist George Packer, at [The Atlantic](#), in 2010, then-Vice President Biden said he did not care about Afghan women. Richard Holbrooke, Obama’s envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan visited Biden’s office. Biden insisted:

“‘I am not sending my boy back there to risk his life on behalf of women’s rights.’ (Biden’s son Beau had recently been deployed to Iraq for a year) ...When Holbrooke asked about the obligation to people who had trusted the U.S. government, Biden said: ‘Fuck that, we don’t have to worry about that. We did it in Vietnam; Nixon and Kissinger got away with it.’”

Packer is not insisting that “human rights” are always the only grounds for committing troops, “but it didn’t explain [Biden’s] hardness, the combativeness. Questions about Afghanistan and its people made Biden rear up and dig in.”

Packer painstakingly confirms what those of us who’ve been involved in what he calls “Task Force Dunkirk.” For a politician who made his name on empathy, Biden’s utter indifference to human suffering seems sociopathic. The disastrous way in which American troops were ordered to pull out left the most vulnerable behind, those targeted as prey by the Taliban. There were many other ways to withdraw. Packer writes:

“It could have used the prospect of leverage, demanding secure airfields and safe passage for Afghans whom the Americans wanted to bring out with them. It could have used airfields in Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad and Kandahar while those cities remained out of Taliban control...but the administration

did none of this.”

Now, the luckiest Afghan refugees are still housed in refugee camps in the Middle East and across the Western world. Resettlement is slow and hard for all involved. Child marriage, language difficulties, unrealistic expectations, a profound sense of entitlement, deep depression, are only some of the challenges. The unluckiest Afghans are trapped in their homeland, terrified. Parents are [selling](#) their daughters – and their kidneys.

As Packer makes clear, it didn't have to be this way.

This one is on you, President Biden. You have forever stained our honor and our standing in the world.

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