

## **My Life Journey**

My life journey has started in a family where we were surrounded by thousands of annihilators with beliefs against women. Since I was six years old, I have started working (weaving carpet) to support my family's finance. In my age of seven, the time that every child is supposed to start school, my family under social and traditional pressures asked me not to attend school. As every girl in my society, it was the biggest mental shock in my life. This was a tradition that girls should stay at home; therefore, girls attending school was a strange issue. Hence, influenced by such a rude concept, my family forced me to stay at home for almost six years; and I passed nearly fourteen golden years of my childhood as a prisoner. Eventually, when I got to my teenage ages, I felt the need of having talks and dialogues with my family members because I have realized that I could not achieve my dreams by weaving carpet and being locked at home. At the beginning, because of the existing common limitative beliefs, it was not easy even discussing such a topic with them. After facing several rejections, I finally made them accept my request. Just persuading they do not oppose my school studies was not enough for why I started this fight.

During the years that I was not able to attend school, I have learned reading, writing and basic mathematics from my older brother because since my childhood I was really interested in learning. During my school years I had to study and work at the same time, therefore I woke up at four o'clock in the morning and worked until school time and after school I continued back to work until eight o'clock at night and after that I did my school homework. In grade ten of my school, I decided to move to a better school that was far from my house for getting more opportunities in my life. My older brother was the only person who has stood by my side. New school has brought me new challenges; most of the times I have not had money for bus therefore, I have walked two hours to go to school and besides school I had to work for my life expenses as I was doing before.

I needed more freedom to fulfil my dreams of being an influencer in the lives of many girls with the same fate, to push them forward fighting and achieving their academic goals and life dreams. Picking a broad perspective and taking action from the very beginning, I started reading inspiring books and biographies of many successful and famous women around the world. Inspired by their stories I shared them with my family which led to a gradual shift of thoughts in my family, from the very traditional to a little moderate one.

As I have personally been the victim of this rigorous set of thoughts, I was organizing and heading numerous social and intellectual programs voluntarily for the people of my community. Throughout those programs, I have tried to inform and educate families and youths about their rights and responsibilities.

To get more involved with people, besides working as a social activist I have started working as a reporter as well. In membership of different organizations. We have launched awareness programs in 24 provinces of Afghanistan for women and young generations to stand for their rights and find their position in community.

During that hard journey of my life, I had my older brother as the biggest mental and financial supporter with me. In every step of my life, he has been with me and has fought with other people to make my journey easier. After my parents passed away, he tried to be like parents for me and my younger brothers. If my brother was not with me, I would be one of those sacrificed women who were expunged, and that no one asks about them.

## **Fleeing to Portugal**

When we were working to make a better life for young generation and women in Afghanistan, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan and once again Afghan people have moved towards a dark period of time. Since they took the power, they have tried to exterminate my ethnicity, and they have had several attacks on Hazara's communities. They have asked women to stay at home as prisoners and forced most of the girls to marry them (Jehadulnekah). Many of social activities and journalists were kidnapped and killed by them.

Being from Hazara ethnicity, a reporter and a social activist have put me in big danger in Afghanistan. I was threatened directly by the Taliban two times and it made my life more difficult there. When the Taliban have taken control of Afghanistan, we decided to continue our work even under Taliban's flag; but one day they came to our office and threatened our life. The other day they called me and warned me that if I continued to my work either they kidnaped me or killed me.

Eventually, the situation has made me contact international friends and ask them for help; they have found an opportunity for me to leave Afghanistan for a safe place in Portugal. I was included in a refugee resettlement project for Afghan peace and human rights activists, happening in Portugal. Offering a multidimensional approach to resettlement, this project aims to develop and consolidate personal and social skills for autonomy and integration in Portuguese society. With the support of local, national and international organizations.

The project offers a training program with theoretical and practical content in agroecology, syntropic agriculture and permaculture, applied in the context of practical work in the territory as well as eco-social, cultural, legal, financial, personal and professional training and support. In Portugal I experienced new work, meet new people and started a new life which is a very important part of me now. When I was struggling for survival, Portugal welcomed me to a safe place and gave me another chance for living. Therefore, Portugal is my second home after Afghanistan and I will never forget this.

## **My brother story written by him:**

"I belong to Hazara ethnic group who are currently facing huge security challenges; I have personally been discriminated many times by the current government personnel when they know I am a Hazara. I have been mistreated several times outside my home, in check points being for some emergencies while knowing no Pashto which in turn make it even worse.

Since the Taliban Takeover of Kabul, I was trying to find a legal way to get out of Afghanistan, but economic and the problems in terms of being the only guardian of my household did not allow me to do so. Last year, I along with other friends were detained by the Taliban and they released us conditionally by signing a disclaimer. Next month, I was detained again due to my work experience and having a history of defending human rights, especially women's rights.

I was extremely horrified that no one should know about that incident at my home as my wife was pregnant. After this incident, I have been doubling my efforts to find safety for my family. With the humanitarian help of friends of my sister I was able to move my family. Life now hasn't been easy but I am doing my best to keep my family in good health while we wait for an opportunity to go to a safe country.

My sister is now trying to help us go to Portugal and if my family and I are accepted in Portugal, I can assure you that I will be a respectable and hard working citizen. I am looking forward for your kind cooperation to rescue us from this horrified situation and have the chance to re-stand for the humanity, values and believe.”