

World

Taliban aim to terrorise Afghan women out of work

Afghanistan

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Grieving relatives and colleagues of three female journalists shot dead in Afghanistan this week have spoken of their determination to honour the victims and keep working despite a wave of targeted killings to terrorise women out of the workplace.

Mursal Waheedi, Saadia Sadat and Shahnaz Raufi, who worked for the local broadcaster Enikass TV, were gunned down as they walked home from the studios in the eastern city of Jalalabad on Tuesday. The women were buried on the same day, in a city reeling with grief and fear. The onslaught shows no sign of abating as a female doctor, Sadaaf Elyasi, 28, was killed yesterday by a bomb attached to a rickshaw in which she was travelling to work.

The latest attacks targeting women follow the murder of two female supreme court judges in Kabul in January and are part of an increasingly vicious campaign to eradicate Afghanistan's educated middle classes.

The attacks on the broadcasters and the doctor were claimed by the Afghan affiliate of Islamic State, which retains a stronghold in the eastern province of Nangarhar. Although Isis and the Taliban are rivals, it serves both their interests if a campaign of mayhem and fear destabilises the country and undermines President Ghani's government.

The Taliban has denied involvement, as that group continues faltering peace talks with the government, but Afghan officials are convinced that the insurgents are behind a recent wave of murders targeting journalists, judges, civil servants, scholars and rights activists, thousands of whom have gone into hiding or are seeking to flee the country as a result.

Speaking after burying his daughter



Mursal, 23, Waheed Ullah said that she had been determined to keep working, despite the growing threat. "My daughter told me: 'If I stay at home, this long conflict in Afghanistan might never end,'" he said, choking back tears. "She was determined to continue her studies and work."

Abdul Rauf, father of Shahnaz Raufi, who was 21, said: "Shahnaz had dreams of university and wanted to be married. Now, both are ruined."

Her brother Haroon Rahimi, who lives in Canada, said on Twitter that his "little sister" had been the "brightness" in their family. She had fought for the right to study and work, hoping to build a better future for herself and Afghanistan.

Tweeting a picture of his sister's grave, Haroon wrote: "All her dreams, ambitions and thoughts are buried with her. Shahnaz stood for women and was a role model for everyone."

Criticising the Afghan government, he added: "I cannot handle the pain. How can you trust the Taliban to negotiate? How can we trust this 'peace process'?"

Grief-stricken colleagues at Enikass TV were confronted yesterday by three empty desks in the dubbing and editing department, where the women worked.



Shahnaz Raufi, Mursal Waheedi and Saadia Sadat, left to right, were killed on their way home from work, apparently by the Afghan Isis affiliate

The broadcaster had already been affected by the murder of Malalai Maiwand, a news anchor with the station, who was shot dead with her driver on her way to work in Jalalabad in December. Friends have now lost four colleagues within weeks, and know they may be next.

Mahaak Baha wept as he surveyed Shahnaz's desk and recalled his last conversation with her, as she left work on Tuesday. Minutes later, she would be dead.

"Just ten minutes before the attack, she said, 'Brother Mahaak, you always tell me that I talk too much. So listen, from now on, I'm not going to talk to you any more. I'll make you crazy to hear my voice again,'" he sobbed. "And it happened. We will not hear her voice again. She has left us alone for ever."

At least 15 prominent journalists and rights workers have been murdered across Afghanistan since peace talks resumed in September last year, only to stall again over the insurgents' refusal to declare a ceasefire, amid spiralling violence. Despite continued efforts to revive the negotiations between the Taliban and Kabul, the Afghan government believes the insurgents have set about the quiet slaughter of the country's professional class, which has ten-

tatively taken root despite the decades of conflict since the Islamists were ousted in 2001. As the Taliban eyes a return to power, Afghans fear that the insurgents have set about eradicating the country's civil society and institutions, which impede their path to restoring the brutal Islamist state that dominated during the 1990s. The group claims that it has moved away from its notorious treatment of women at that time, when they were barred from education and work, forced to wear the burqa and faced public flogging or execution for violating Taliban laws. Reports of girls' schools being bombed in Taliban-held areas have fuelled suspicions that this claim was window-dressing for American negotiators, as the US pressured the Afghan government last year to join the talks with few security guarantees from the insurgents.

In Jalalabad, Kabul and other cities, there is mounting fury that the killers can strike at will.

"As a reporter, I should at least know who my killer is. Is this Daesh [Isis], the Taliban or the government itself?" demanded Zabiullah Ghazi, a local reporter. "The killers strike and escape in broad daylight. No one is safe."

Despite the defiance of many, the terrorist onslaught is hollowing out Afghanistan's media and civil society. Those who can afford it are leaving in their thousands. Many more have gone to ground or work only from home. With each murder, the number of those venturing out dwindles further. For many at Enikass TV, the tragedy of this week was the final straw.

"My father will not let me go back to Enikass again," said Nadia Momand, a colleague of the three women. "He said: 'I don't want to see you in a coffin.'"

The US special envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, arrived in Qatar yesterday for his first talks with the Taliban since President Biden said he was reviewing the peace process.



Jeffrey Epstein's seven-storey French

neoclassical mansion on Manhattan's Upper East Side is expected to sell to an unnamed buyer. The late tycoon hosted Prince Andrew at the house

ALAMY, JAE DONNELLY



Epstein's house of horrors close to \$50m sale

The Manhattan mansion where Jeffrey Epstein entertained business

tycoons, celebrities and Prince Andrew is said to be on the verge of selling for \$50 million (Will Pavia writes).

The townhouse on the Upper East Side, which is known as the largest single-family home in New York city, was put up for sale last summer, a year after Epstein took his own life in jail while awaiting trial for sex trafficking.

Valued in Epstein's will at \$56 million, it was placed on the market for \$88 million as the Herbert N Straus Mansion. It was built in the 1930s for the heir to the Macy's department store, who hired the architect Horace Trumbauer to construct a seven-storey town house in the French neoclassical style, with imported limestone. Straus also imported furniture from Europe and "entire 18th-century rooms", according to Adam Modlin, the estate agent selling the house, who does not mention Epstein in his listing.

After Straus, the house became a hospital and then a private school. Leslie Wexner, the retail magnate behind such

brands as Abercrombie & Fitch and Victoria's Secret, converted it back into a home. Epstein, who was a financial adviser to Wexner, moved into it in 1996.

It was said that Wexner had given it to him but in fact he paid Wexner \$20 million for it in 1998, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, citing an anonymous source. The paper also reported that the property was in contract to be sold at \$50 million to an unnamed buyer — a relatively fast sale given its association with Epstein, who was accused of abusing minors there. Ghislaine Maxwell, who managed Epstein's properties and lived near by, is in jail awaiting trial for assisting him. She denies the charges.

One of Epstein's accusers described being brought to the house in 2001, when she was 14, and seeing rooms lined with mahogany and filled with exotic stuffed animals and skins laid out on the floor.

A *Vanity Fair* reporter wrote in 2003 that the entrance hall was decorated with rows of individually framed eyeballs that Epstein said were imported from England, where they had been made for soldiers.

Families shot at kidnapping reunion

Nigeria

Jane Flanagan

At least one person was shot dead and others were injured by security forces in Nigeria when a drawn-out ceremony involving local dignitaries to mark the return of 279 kidnapped schoolgirls turned violent.

A crowd of the girls' frustrated parents and supporters, who were demanding to be reunited with their freed children, had bullets and tear gas fired at them after they interrupted speeches and threw stones at visiting dignitaries. A witness claimed that children were among those struck by live rounds outside the girls' school in the northwestern state of Zamfara as parents were kept waiting while the local chief spoke.

"We got tired of waiting. The government officials were talking and talking while we were just waiting to take our kids," Safiyanu Jangebe, a parent, told CNN. "They started saying that they would hand over the girls to us tomor-



The girls' trauma continued after the drawn-out ceremony turned violent

row [Thursday]. We couldn't take that ... some angry youths started throwing stones at the soldiers. They started firing and shot three kids. One is dead. Why is the government treating us without human feelings?"

Witnesses said that shots rang out after distraught relatives stormed into the hall of the Government Girls' Secondary School in the remote village

of Jangebe, where the ceremony was being held. A crowd of youths who were with them began throwing stones at government officials as parents grabbed their daughters.

Bello Gidan-Ruwa, from Jangebe, said he thought that four people had been killed. The government has not provided information on injuries and deaths.

Abutu Yaro, the police commissioner in Zamfara, which has been overrun by criminal gangs, denied that any shots had been fired at parents or children.

Immediately after the violence, a dusk-to-dawn curfew was imposed on Jangebe by the authorities "to prevent any further breach of peace".

The schoolgirls were snatched from their beds by gunmen in the early hours of last Friday. Many were threatened with death unless they marched barefoot to a forest, where they were held until their release on Tuesday. They had been receiving medical care in Gusau, the state capital.

Biden called off airstrike at last minute

United States

David Charter Washington

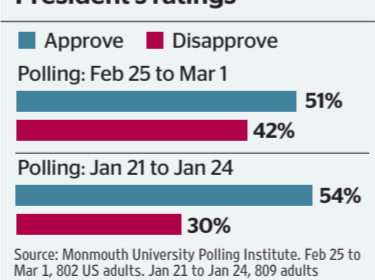
President Biden called off an airstrike on a target inside Syria 30 minutes before the bombing when a woman and two children were spotted there.

Biden went ahead with one strike last week in retaliation for a rocket attack by Iranian-backed militants in northern Iraq but aborted a second while US F-15E Strike Eagle planes were en route, *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

The change of plan was advised by Lloyd Austin, the defence secretary and a former commander of US forces in the Middle East, the only senior member of Biden's cabinet with military experience. Biden, 78, wanted to make sure that the first military action of his presidency was viewed in the region as a show of force but not an escalation of hostilities, aides have said.

The US strike was aimed at facilities used by Iranian-backed terrorist groups believed to have been involved

President's ratings



in an attack on February 15 on Arbil airport that killed a foreign contractor and wounded seven Americans, according to the Pentagon. It was timed for the middle of the night and avoided Iranian and Iraqi territory so as not to appear provocative, officials said. One militia fighter was killed and two injured.

Biden's decision not to proceed when there was clear intelligence of probable civilian casualties was followed by a secret message to Tehran, the news-

Germany

Germany

Oliver Moody Berlin

The German government secretly funded the atomic research centre that became the cradle of Israel's clandestine nuclear weapons programme in the 1960s, files released by the foreign ministry in Berlin disclose.

One of the men behind the loans was Hans Globke, a high-ranking functionary in the Third Reich who became the top civil servant in the West German democratic state after the war.

Globke's story has been reconstructed in *The Spider in the Web*, a two-part special edition this week of the *Stories of Our Times* podcast.

Archive documents disclose how the British released him after the Second World War. He went on to build an administrative empire through his extensive contacts in the worlds of intelligence, politics and the civil service.

Under the Nazis Globke, a devout Catholic, served as a Ministerialrat, the

head of a specialist unit, in the Reich interior ministry. He was responsible for "questions of citizenship and race", earning praise from his superiors for his diligence, capability and "positive attitude" towards Nazism.

In 1936 he wrote an infamous legal



Hans Globke was said to have leaked information to the resistance

commentary on the Nuremberg race laws, which stripped Jews and other "non-Aryans" of their political rights.

During the war he travelled across the newly-occupied territories, from France to Czechoslovakia, issuing further rulings on how to distinguish between Aryans and "lesser" races.

He did not orchestrate the Holocaust but the German government acknowl-

edged last year that he was involved in laying its legal foundations.

In the last days of the war Globke was captured by the US army in Bavaria and interrogated by British officials as they tried to flush out former Nazis.

He was exonerated, largely on the basis of several anti-Nazi campaigners who argued that he had leaked information to the resistance. In 1949 Konrad Adenauer, the new chancellor, hired Globke to be one of his closest aides, despite protests from the opposition parties and parts of the CIA.

Three years later he helped to broker a reparations agreement with Israel that was West Germany's ticket to rehabilitation in the western world.

In 1960 Globke, Adenauer and other West German officials began work on a highly classified deal to lend Israel 2 billion deutschmarks, about £4 billion in today's terms, for a "development project" in the Negev desert.

Gaby Weber, a German journalist based in Buenos Aires, has obtained

records of the negotiations with the German foreign ministry after years of legal wrangling.

The files suggest that this "development project" was the atomic research facility at Dimona, where Israel is thought to have developed its earliest nuclear weapons.

The *Times* has been unable to verify the documents because the archive is closed under lockdown but some details were independently corroborated.

Israel has never confirmed that it has nuclear warheads. Yet the German files published by Weber suggest that its ambitions were clear from the start.

Some German diplomats seem to have been appalled by the deal, warning that if exposed it would provoke a ferocious response across the Arab world.

The Spider in the Web: The Hans Globke Story is available as a two-part podcast on the *Stories of Our Times* podcast. Search and listen free on the Times Radio app, Spotify, Acast, Apple, Google Podcasts and more.



The World at Five
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