

The dreams that died

I passed by my bookshelf and saw a black notebook. When I saw it, I felt a terrible fear that I can't forget. Even though three years have passed since this story and this writing, it's still hard for me. I can't accept and forget it.

I had heard many times that the Taliban came and were taking over different provinces, but I thought they couldn't come to Kabul. I believed they would eventually leave the other province, and everything would return to normal. But no, something strange happened. As people say, the oath of the people and God is not the same.

As always, I woke up early and made breakfast. And as always, I went outside and looked at the sky. On this day, it seemed different, very different. It seemed dangerous. I reminded myself: "You have an exam today, so focus on your lessons." Our school started at 7 am. The exam was, as usual, at 7:30 am. Fortunately, I passed my exam, and afterwards, I made my way back home. Having arrived, I could barely keep my eyes open, so I decided to sleep.

After a few minutes, I heard a weak noise - it was my mother's voice. She had gone to the bazar, happy as always, but when she returned, she didn't look happy at all. She looked afraid. "What had happened?", I asked my mother carefully. She looked at me, still in shock, while saying: "The Taliban arrived in Kabul. All the supermarkets are closed. No one is in the streets. It's a nightmare!" Speechless, I stared at her for a while. "Mother, what are you saying?", I asked her in disbelief, "That's not a good joke!" "I'm not joking, dear, that's the truth", my mother replied with teary eyes. When I heard this, everything went black around me, as the world had shattered right in front of my eyes. I cried. I cried endlessly.

When I look back, I wonder what I was crying for? For the dreams that died? For my freedom that was taken? For the girls of my country who will never forget this plight and whose hearts are broken? What was I crying for?

After that day, nothing went well. Nothing was the way it used to be. I stayed at home and didn't go out for many days. Eventually, after some days have passed, my family decided we should go somewhere for Muharram, so we went to a relative's house. On the way, the streets were empty. No one was in streets, except the Taliban. This was the first time I saw them. They were everywhere. It felt terrible and strange to me. I was very afraid, but since I was dressed properly, they didn't say anything.

I have many things to write about how life changed after the Taliban came. Even if I wrote for many years, it wouldn't be enough. Nothing is like the past. We cried a lot and went through many bad days. Everything is different now and everyone has these problems - me and all those people who share my story.

To my Afghan girls: We all are struggling, but we need to continue. We need to be strong – for ourselves and because of our dreams – and everything will become as good as we want it to be. Persist. Stay strong. I am proud of you, and I know you will never give up.