

Heroes Or Traitors: American Military Intervention In Afghanistan And The Local Allies Left Behind

Introduction

Post 9/11 the US Army invaded Afghanistan and recruited local civilians (almost 90,000) for different services. My research focuses on the Non-Combatant Local Allies, who provided translating services during combat missions as well as military-humanitarian assistance to U.S Army in Afghanistan. Based on delivering “faithful and valuable service,” they were promised Special Immigration Visa to settle in the USA in case of facing threats from the Taliban. Their “faithful” service to the American was considered treason by the Taliban. As a result, the Taliban started to hunt them down to kill.

Method

Location: Kabul, Afghanistan

Duration: 7 months from 10/17-04/18

I conducted in-depth interviews with the local translators and a US Army who served in Afghanistan. I conducted the interviews in two local languages, (Persian, Pashto) and English.

I also collected the Taliban published leaflets, and warning letters asking the individuals to stop working with the foreign forces.



Sayed Jalal Shajjan
M. A Social and Cultural Anthropology
Email: Jsaeedsh@gmail.com

Photo: My informants were kind enough to share their photos with me!



Field Experience

Researching a sensitive topic such as individuals who are considered traitors by the opposing group (the Taliban) in post-conflict Afghanistan is very challenging. I was not only trying to gain my informants trust, but also to take into consideration their safety. During my fieldwork, Kabul witnessed its worst phase of insurgents attacks, months of October and November were the deadliest months, where suicide bombing was widespread not only in Kabul but throughout Afghanistan. Hence my data collection was severely affected by the insecurity.

Research Question

The core concern of this research project is to explore, in details, how SIV is seen and how SIV hopefuls (applicants) manage to live in hiding from the Taliban while waiting for visas.

Research Aim: Usually the military intervention or military-humanitarian intervention is considered to bring peace and prosperity to the targeted population’s live. However, it not always the case, through the lives of individual documented during my fieldwork, this research project would try to explore how precarious lives are created by mere involvement with the foreign military forces.

Research Findings

The interpreters alliance with the US forces resulted in significant threats to their lives as well as putting severe social and economic limitations on them. However, the Special Immigration Visas initiated by the US government gives them hope for a better future. But the better future is not easy for everyone to access, SIV hopefuls have to wait for years in hiding until they get their visa.

