



A JOURNEY THROUGH WAR AND LIFE IN AFGHANISTAN

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LEGACY OF HOPE

In the spring of 2002, just a year after the tragic assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud by Al-Qaeda, we embarked on a 2715 km overland expedition across Afghanistan. Despite the ongoing conflict between the US Army and the Taliban, generating daily news for prominent photographers, our focus was on capturing the everyday lives of Afghans, a perspective often overlooked in the news cycle. Along our journey, we encountered individuals enduring the impacts of multiple wars, facing threats from both foreign and domestic forces. Yet, amidst the adversities, these resilient people stood unwavering, their eyes reflecting a glimmer of hope and excitement sparked by the downfall of Al-Qaeda.

Nearly two decades later, as I revisit the images from that expedition, a profound sadness envelops me. However, it is juxtaposed with a recognition of the incredible resilience displayed by the Afghan people, a reminder that hope endures even in the face of hardship.

Fast forward to March 2022, after the Taliban regained control, I returned to Afghanistan. This journey sought to uncover traces of hope among the Afghan people in the aftermath of the Taliban's takeover. Starting from Herat, through Kabul, and reaching Mazar-i-Sharif, the improvements in roads, urban development, and communication were evident. The impact of mass communication tools, particularly smartphones, on people's lives was crystal clear. Yet, the grip of restrictive traditions and religious beliefs, strengthened by the Taliban's resurgence, played a significant role in shaping daily life.

I witnessed the Nowruz ceremony in Mazar-i-Sharif inspiring Afghans, and fostering happiness among the people. However, this time, the Taliban banned the annual Jahenda Bala ceremony, the largest recorded Nowruz gathering celebrating the banner-raising tradition.

Throughout my journey, conversations with people of all ages revealed optimism for positive changes despite widespread poverty. As my second journey in Afghanistan concludes, I aspire to return to this beautiful land, capturing the lives of those born, lived, and passed away during the war. These individuals embody resilience and hope, leaving behind a legacy for the next generation.



We stopped for a moment on our way to Mazar-e-Sharif to take a walk in order to get rid of the road fatigue. As we got into the car, they gathered around us and cheerfully escorted us. Afghanistan 2002.



Sometimes, to capture a single portrait, I had to photograph a group of eager Afghans all wanting to be in the picture. Afghanistan, 2002.



To photograph burqa-clad women in the streets of Kabul, I encountered this overwhelming crowd of men. Kabul, Afghanistan, 2002.



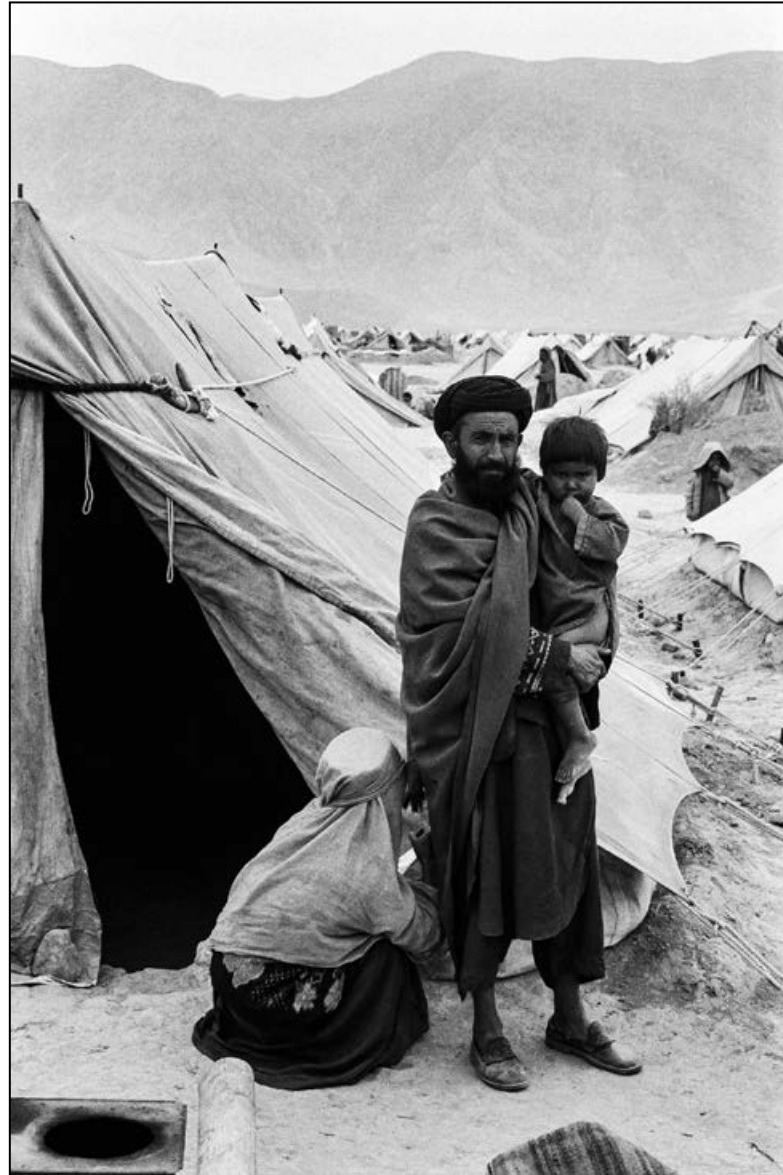
A traditional school (maktabkhana) in the city of Kabul. Afghanistan, 2002.



A young boy from Kandahar with his family. Afghanistan, 2002.



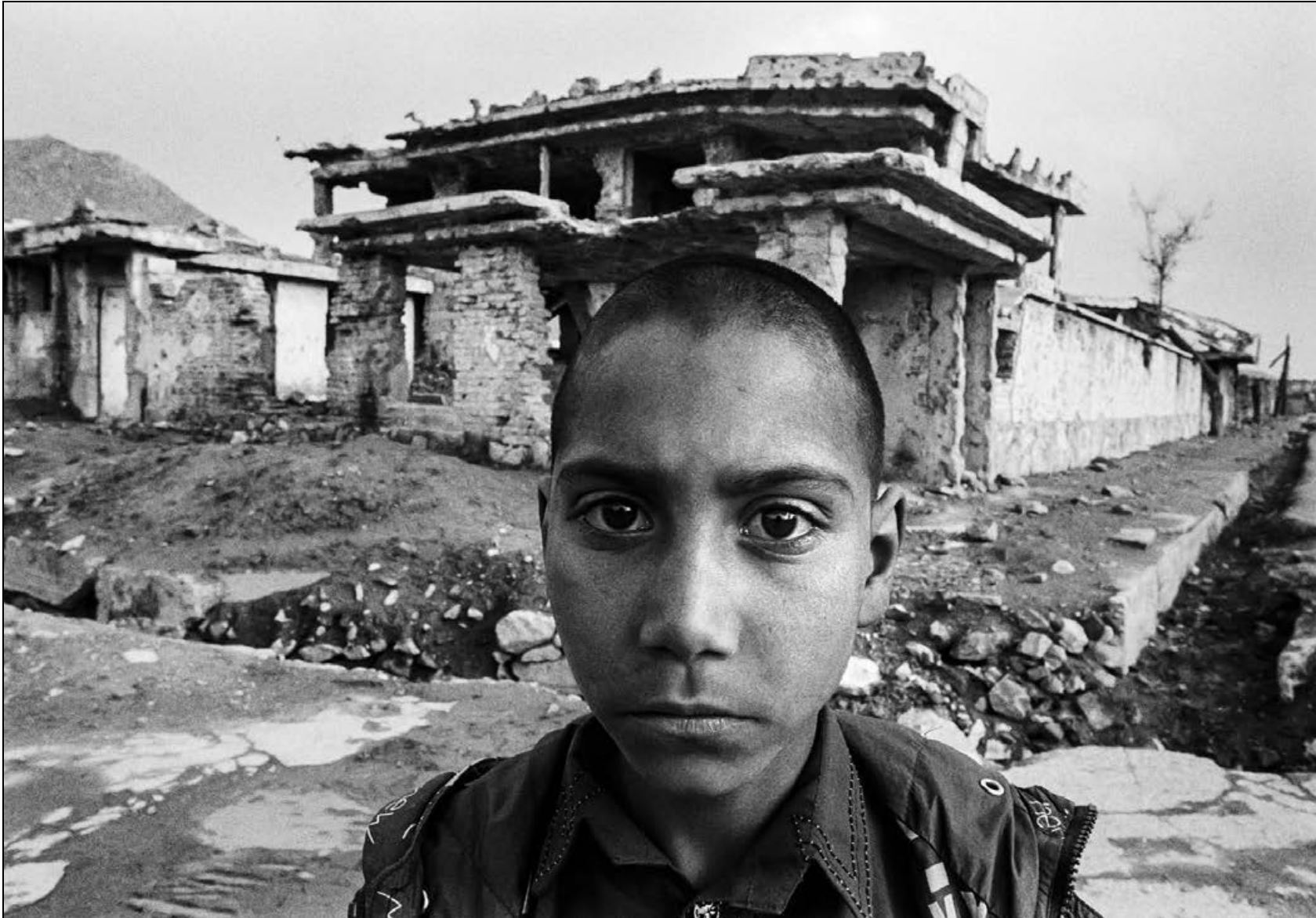
A group of Afghan women during the Janda Bala (flag raising) ceremony held in celebration of Nowruz in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



A man with his wife and child
in a United Nations camp on
the road to Mazar-i-Sharif.
Afghanistan, 2002.



Behold this captivating snapshot captured in 2002 amidst the vibrant streets of Herat. It reflects a time when the Taliban had not yet ascended to power, and the hearts of the people were brimming with optimism, yearning for the dawn of a promising new era.



A young boy from Herat in front of war ruins. Afghanistan, 2002.



An Afghan family migrating along a road leading to Kabul. Afghanistan, 2002.



Afghan highway police on a route from Kabul to Mazar-i-Sharif. Afghanistan, 2002.



Portrait photography of a young girl in Herat. Afghanistan, 2002.



I remember this policeman was waving his hand for hours to lead the cars. After a short conversation, I asked him: "how old are you?" He said: "Its been years that i still don't know!". Afghanistan, 2002.



A family in the trunk of a car
in Herat, Afghanistan, 2002.



A policeman during the Janda Bala Nowruz ceremony in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



A boy in a United Nations camp on the road to Mazar-i-Sharif. Afghanistan, 2002.



A girl in her father's arms.
Kandahar, Afghanistan, 2002.



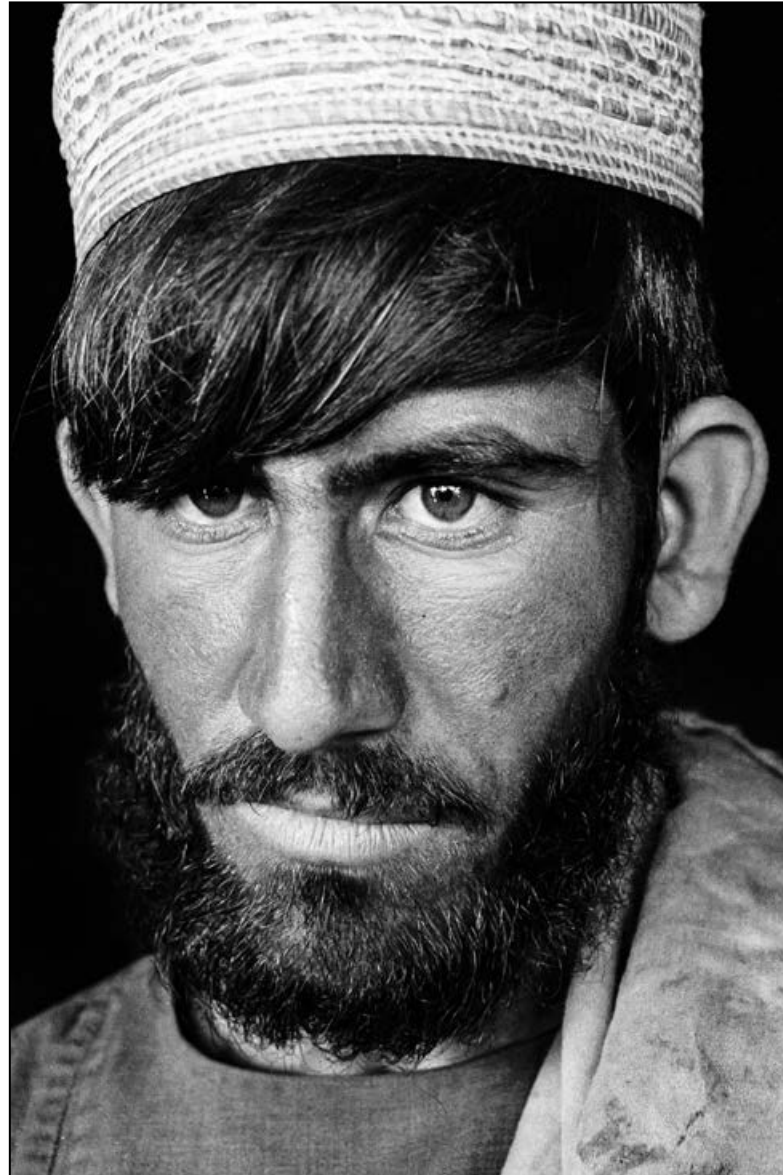
Herat Minarets.
Afghanistan 2002.



Poor Afghan children stood by the rough, dusty roads between cities, sprinkling soft sand on the road in hopes of receiving help. Kabul to Mazar-i-Sharif road, Afghanistan, 2002.



A man during the Janda Bala Nowruz ceremony in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



A worker at a roadside restaurant between Kandahar and Kabul, Afghanistan, 2002.



A group of schoolchildren on the first day of the academic year in Kabul, Afghanistan, 2002.



A group of schoolchildren on the first day of the academic year in Kabul, Afghanistan, 2002.



Could I take picture from
you? Let me take my burqa
off to make my photo
beautiful!
Gold bracelets, fashionable
coats and eyebrow
makeup all show a rich
Afghan woman hiding under
a burqa! Afghanistan 2002.



The raising of the grand Janda Bala flag was one of the most important parts of the Nowruz celebration in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, 2002.



The raising of the grand Janda Bala flag was one of the most important parts of the Nowruz celebration in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, 2002.



A woman during the Janda Bala Nowruz ceremony in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



A girl during the Janda Bala Nowruz ceremony in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



Street market in
Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan,
2002.



Children playing in a street in Kabul, Afghanistan, 2002.



A poor girl warming her hands outside a house near a road between Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan 2002.



A street in Herat.
Afghanistan, 2002.



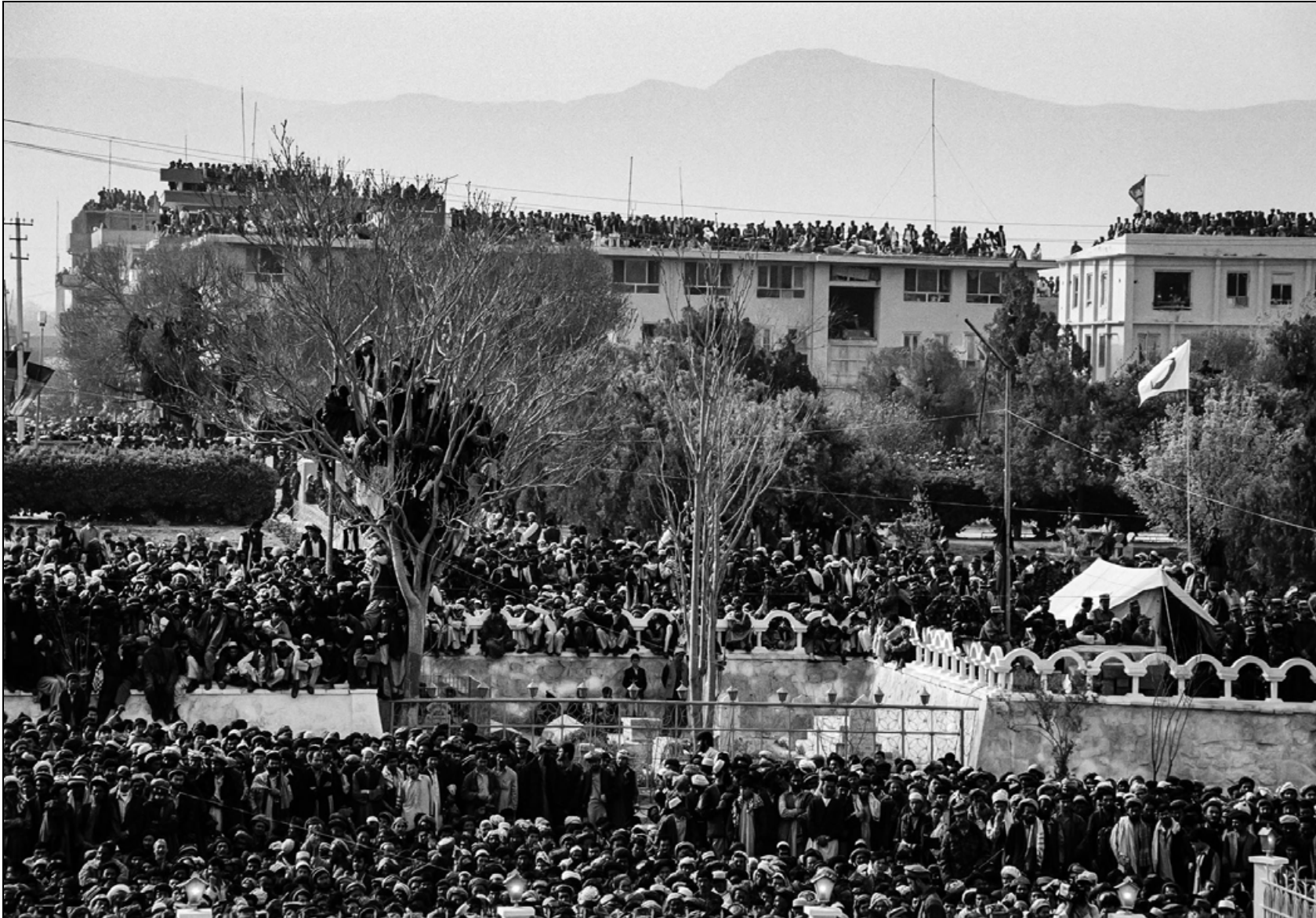
A group of men during a Buzkashi match. Afghanistan, 2002.



A poor family on the roadside between Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif. Afghanistan, 2002.



Officials raising the Janda Bala flag for Nowruz in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



A large crowd eager to attend the Janda Bala Nowruz ceremony in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



A man beside his son in Herat, Afghanistan, 2002.



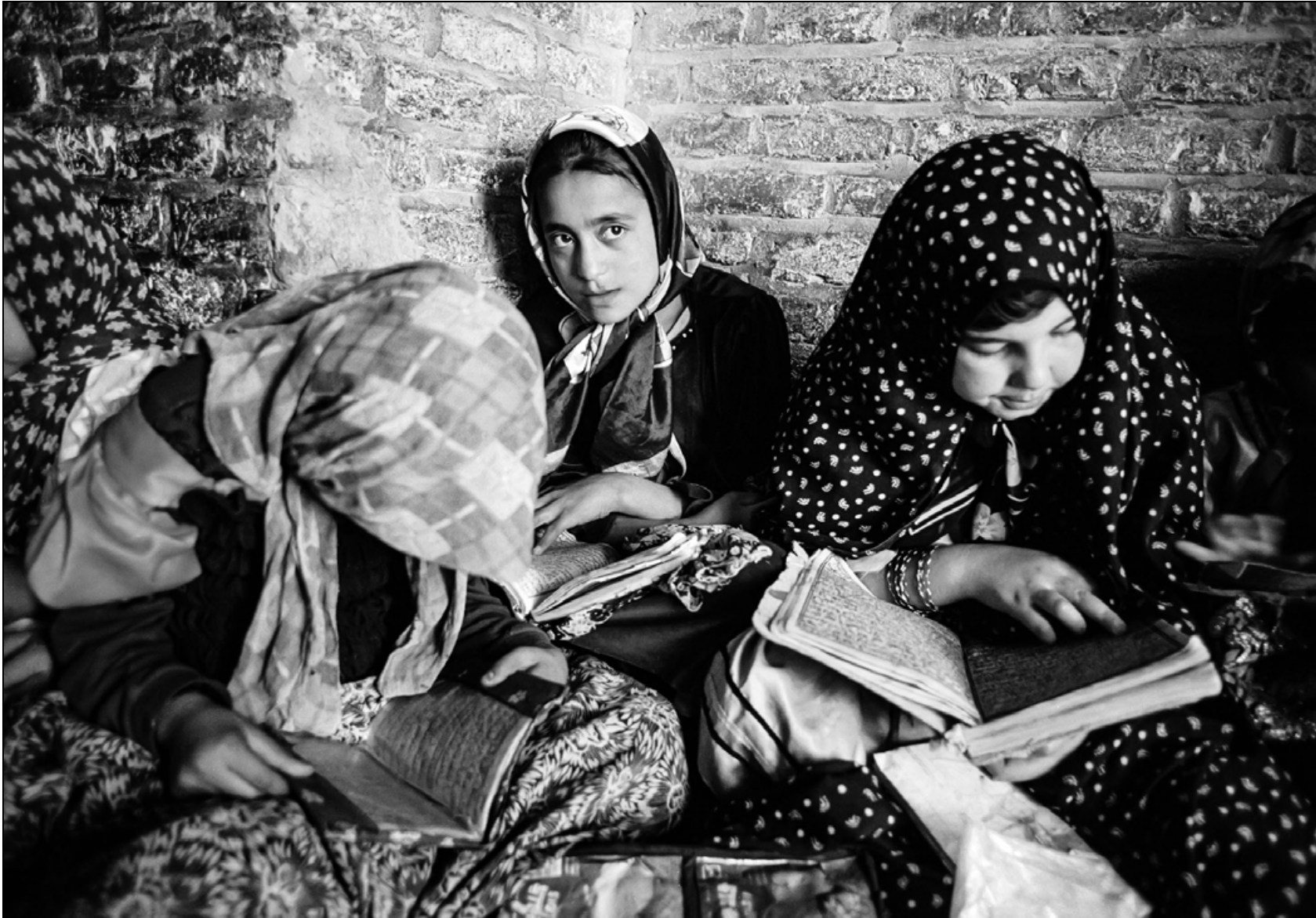
A boy in a car on a road leading to Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



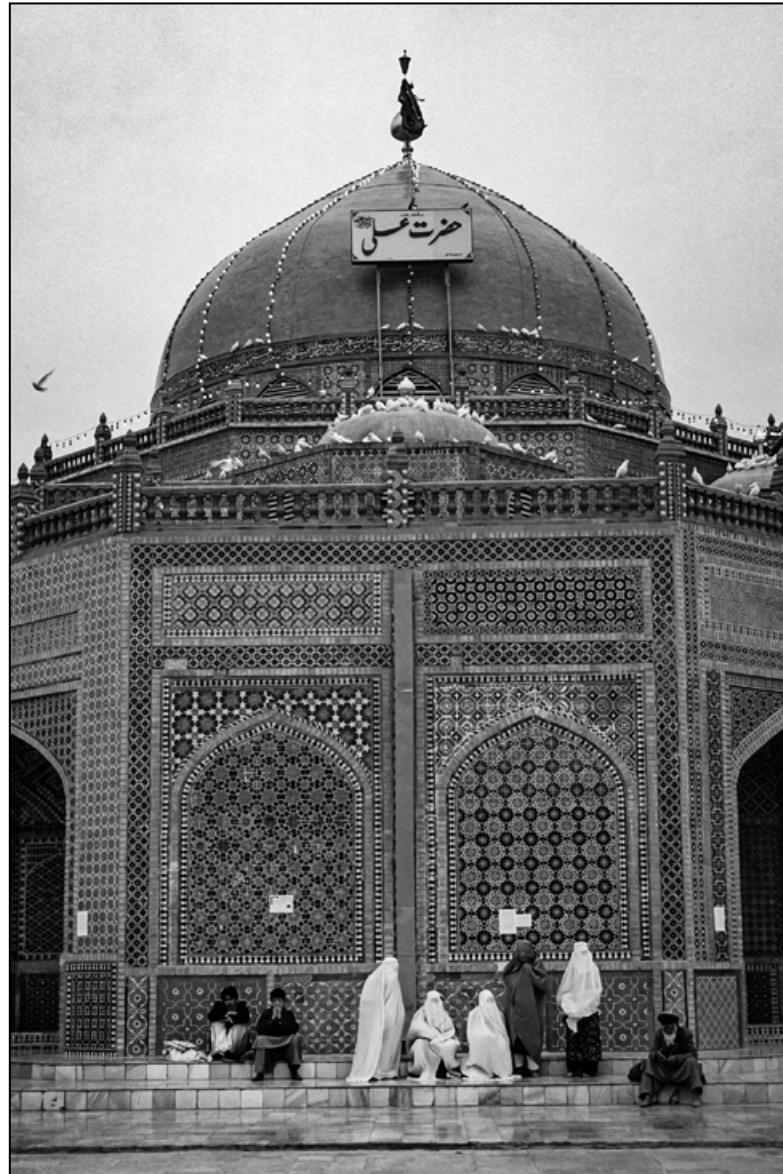
She looked at me without saying a word. A look filled with a hundreds of words. War, Poverty and Anxiety! She seemed to want to tell me something, but suddenly a woman called her in front of the queue! Mazar Sharif, Afghanistan 2002.



The portrait of an Afghan child whose face can be summed up in three words: resistance, courage and hope!
Afghanistan 2002



A traditional school (maktabhana) in the city of Kabul, Afghanistan, 2002.



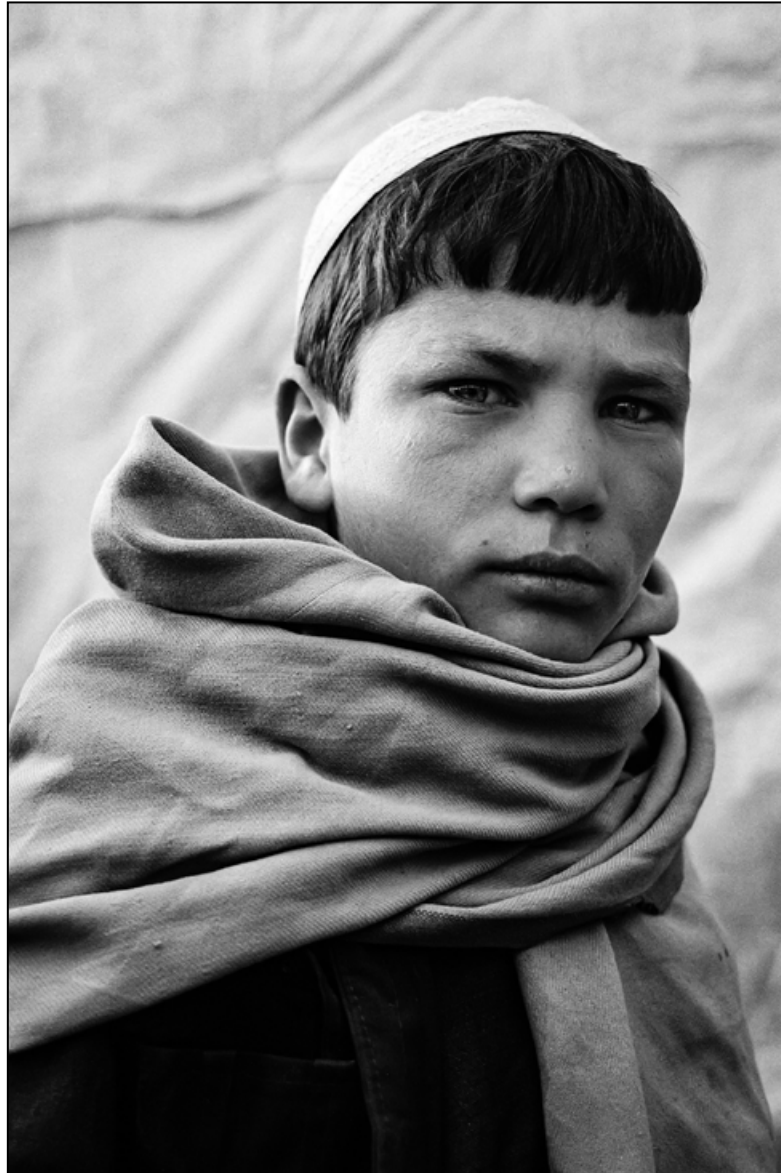
A view of Imam Ali Mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



Men during the Janda Bala Nowruz ceremony in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



A man combing his beard during the Janda Bala Nowruz ceremony. Afghanistan, 2002.



Portrait of a boy from
Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan,
2002.



Portrait of a Man from
Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan,
2002.



Intercity gasoline station
between Herat and Kabul.
Afghanistan 2002.



Drivers praying at dawn during the call to prayer on the road heading to Kabul. Afghanistan 2002.



A group of women during the Janda Bala Nowruz ceremony in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



A group of women during the Janda Bala Nowruz ceremony in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2002.



Poor Afghan children stood by the rough, dusty roads between cities, sprinkling soft sand on the road in hopes of receiving help. Kabul to Mazar-i-Sharif road, Afghanistan, 2002.



A view of a dirt road leading to Kabul, Afghanistan, 2002.



“I’m tired of the war and I hope the Taliban will adjust the people’s quality of life.”, says the 40-year-old Allahbakhsh. Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan 2022.



“I’m tired of living in the street, I wish I will have a shelter for myself one day”, says the 13-year-old Farough. Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan 2022.



"I live to provide for my family.", says the 56-year-old Amanuddin. Derb-e-Malek Square, Herat city. Afghanistan 2022.



“I would like to travel to USA one day.”, says the 6-year-old Baqir while reading Quran. Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan 2022.



"I wish one day I can have a car for myself", says the 16-year-old Maalik. Herat city - Afghanistan 2022.



“I tried to immigrate to Iran so many times, but I couldn’t. I hope to get an entrance permit this time via my uncle.”, says the 17-year-old Qadir. Herat city, Afghanistan 2022.



“I would like to become a pilot one day and travel to all countries.”, says the 13-year-old Yarmuhammad. Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan 2022.



“My dream is to have a smart phone.”, says the 15-year-old Zarif. Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan 2022.



“I aspire the peace in Afghanistan and I want Taliban to open 7th grade schools.”, says the 13-year-old Saareh. Kabul, Afghanistan 2022.



“My wish is to have a home next to my brother. The war made us orphans, and peace is something I pray for every day. Kabul, Afghanistan 2022.



“I wish the Taliban lift the prohibition on girl’s education in 7th grade and upper grades.”, says the 12-year-old 6th grader Narges. Herat city, Afghanistan 2022.



"I do not want to cry for school, I would like to be a doctor" says the 12-year-old 6th grader Parisa. Herat city, Afghanistan 2022.



“One day, I would like to become a doctor, if they let me get educated!”, says the 12-year-old Samar. Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan 2022.



“We live in order to make things better. I hope the the people’s quality of life gets better since Taliban took over.”, says the 31-year-old Aseel. Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan 2022.



"I lost my father in the war and I wish that our country can get rid of shadow of war.", says the 30-year-old Na'maan. Herat city, Afghanistan 2022.



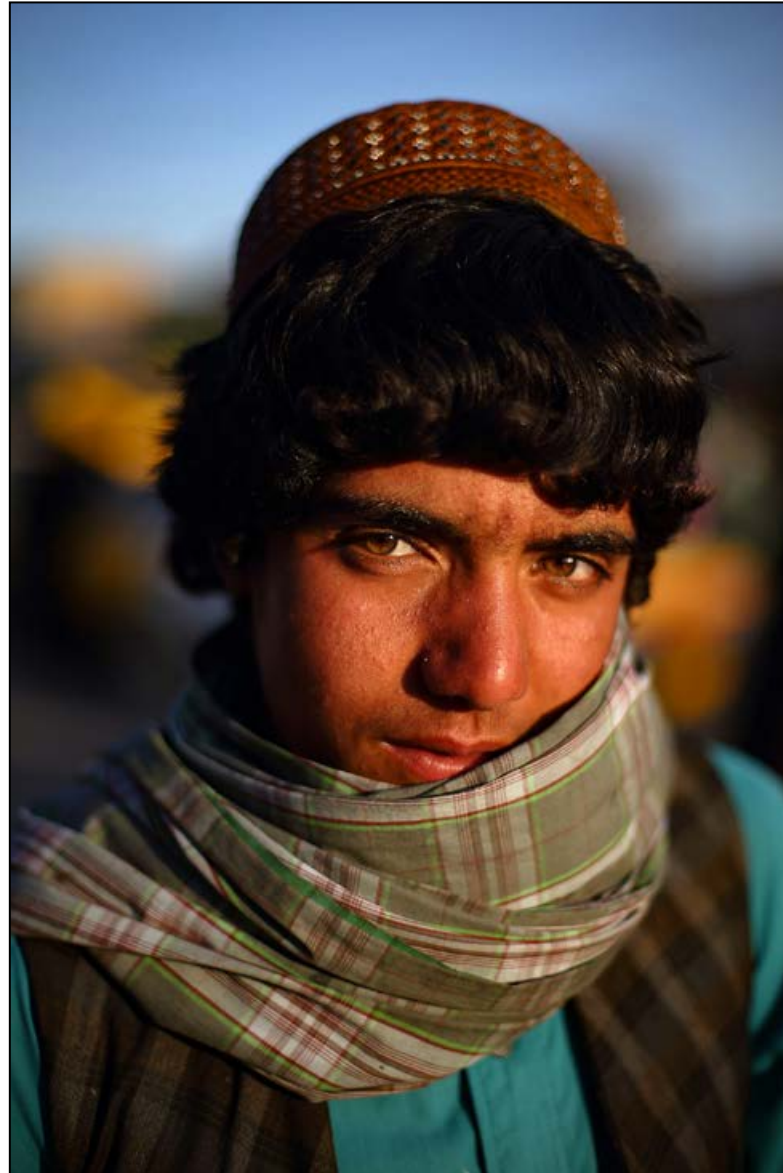
Muhammad says: “There’s more security in city due to prevail of the Taliban”
Derb-e-Malek Square, Herat city. Afghanistan 2022.



“I’ve just recruited by the Taliban and I’d like to find position in a public office one day.”, says the 26-year-old Ahmad. Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan 2022.



"I aspire to find a proper job in the Bazaar one day," says the 17-year-old Khalid. Derb-e-Malek Square, Herat city. Afghanistan 2022.



I would like to go to university and become a road & transportation engineer to modify my country's dirt roads." says the 15-year-old Islaah.
Herat city, Afghanistan 2022.



“I wish to study abroad one day,” said Ikram, who plays volleyball with red shirt. Sahe Rahayeshi neighborhood of Mazar-i-Sharif. Afghanistan 2022.



“Basim and Tabassum are Siblings. They desire to fly on an airplane one day. Herat city, Afghanistan 2022.



“I spend all of my income to buy gasoline! And i have a hard time living with my wife and eight children. God, is it possible that the price of gasoline will decrease one day?”, says the 45-year-old Ommar. Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan 2022.



“Since the Taliban took control, women’s freedom has been declined. For example, I wanted to have fun with my wife at Wazir Akbar Khan Hill, but they have set the area a gender segregation for the area.”, says the 25-year-old Yaavar. Kabul, Afghanistan 2022.



“After the Taliban took over, I joined them. You have more security and welfare in Iran than us! Things that we’ve been looking for in Afghanistan for years.”, says the 40-year-old Saadullah. Herat city, Afghanistan 2022.



A view of the Sakhi Shah-e Mardan Shrine Mosque in Kabul. Afghanistan, 2022.



Herat Minarets.
Afghanistan 2022.



A passenger vehicle operating on the Herat to Kabul route. Afghanistan, 2022.



A family next to the Sakhi Shah-e Mardan Shrine Mosque in Kabul, Afghanistan, 2022.



A woman alongside her husband shopping in Herat Bazaar who refused to talk to me. Herat city, Afghanistan 2022.



A man in his shop in Herat.
Afghanistan, 2022.



A view of the local market in the city center of Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2022.



A mural is seen on a school wall in Herat, where the Taliban have defaced children's faces on March 27, 2022. After the Taliban took power, girls were banned from secondary school and university.