

The New York Times

At War

Notes From the Front Lines

SEPTEMBER 2, 2009, 1:24 PM

Hell? No. I Won't Go.

By *SULTAN M. MUNADI*

Update / Wednesday, Sept. 9: *Sultan Munadi, an Afghan journalist with The New York Times, was abducted by gunmen along with correspondent Stephen Farrell in northern Afghanistan on Saturday. Mr. Munadi was killed early Wednesday in a commando raid that freed Mr. Farrell. Mr. Munadi, a 34-year-old father of two, contributed reporting to multiple stories published in The New York Times. Below, is a blog post he wrote about his commitment to and his hopes for his country.*

KABUL, Afghanistan – I grew up in the Panjshir Valley, in a place that is a three-hour walk from the nearest road. We don't have a lot of iron there, we don't have concrete, we don't have these artificial things. It's a completely natural place.

Tyler Hicks/The New York Times Sultan M. Munadi

I grew up there, and when I went to Germany to study for a master's degree in public policy I saw concrete everywhere, a lot of glass, asphalt and artificial things. It was depressing, very boring for me. I was dreaming of the dust, I was dreaming of nature in my country, of the mountains. It's really nice to be back for a while, it's very hard to be away for two years.

If I were a teenager, it would be easier to be integrated into the society in Germany, but now at the age of 34, it is difficult to be away from my country. I would not leave Afghanistan. I have passed the very darkest times of my country, when there was war and insecurity. I was maybe four or five years old when we went from my village into the mountains and the caves to hide, because the Soviets were bombing. I have passed those times, and the time of the Taliban when I could not even go to Kabul, inside my country. It was like being in a prison.

Those times are past now. Now I am hopeful of a better situation. And if I leave this country, if other people like me leave this country, who will come to Afghanistan? Will it be the Taliban who come to govern this country? That is why I want to come back, even if it means cleaning the streets of Kabul. That would be a better job for me, rather than working, for example, in a restaurant in Germany.

Being a journalist is not enough; it will not solve the problems of Afghanistan. I want to work for the education of the country, because the majority of people are illiterate. That is the main problem facing many Afghans. I am really committed to come back and work for my country.

The New York Times has set up a fund for Mr. Munadi's family. If you would like to contribute, please mail your checks here:

The New York Times
680 Eighth Avenue, 3rd Fl.
New York, NY 10018
Attn: Cynthia Latimer

Checks must be made payable to "The New York Times," noting Sultan Munadi's name in the memo field.