

Videoconference with Sahra Mani, Thursday 8th February 2024



I left Afghanistan with my family to seek refuge in Lebanon. I was a **child refugee** in 1980, after the beginning of the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989), when the Soviets arrived. I had **no access to school and education**.

I was the photographer of my community. I didn't know what it was like to live outside of this small community. My films are about from what I knew. I wanted to tell my story: it came from my heart.

So when I arrived in **the UK** it was incredible!! I was 23-24 years old and had always thought that women were second-class people. There, I discovered that women could have equal rights as men! It was a huge revolution! I realized that there could be equality in gender, colour, nationality, cultures. So my dream became to find out about other cultures.

"Now, I could work, live of story-telling. To have a camera was my chance."

My definition of **feminism**: Men have been leaders for hundreds of years. So women have no access to any form of power.

- equality, equal salary, same opportunity to job and work. Push more women forward and give them new opportunities.

- as women, we must be proud of other women, accept them with their different colours and cultures.

→ All this comes from the bottom of my heart.

Motherhood is very special.

I don't have children because I look after my younger brothers and sisters. I help them with their homework. There are so many motherless children that if I had time, I would adopt one of them. My siblings and my films are my children.

- 2012
- Came back to Afghanistan
 - Became a **teacher** at university in Kaboul / taught to older students
 - Gave lectures on cinema and could make films.
 - I attended the **music school** to shoot a film because **music** is beautiful. Can it save our world?

- 2021
- The Taliban** came back to power and everything changed...
All music schools closed. Guns replaced instruments. The school where I went is now a military base.
Boys can go to school but girls can't. Boys are brainwashed.



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Taliban should not exist! They are fundamentalists who brainwash people. They are not masters, they are terrorists! How can we trust terrorists? Foreign countries are sending money without knowing what is made of this money. It is not used to help the Afghan population, it is used on weapons.

I became a **film maker** about women and children because they are not part of any war. War is not coming from women or god. Men are the ones who take the wrong decisions for us. We can take no political decisions and yet we are the first ones to be affected. Afghanistan is just a country that is to everyone.

You are very lucky to have "normal" problems like exams, family issues.
Study to choose your life which is a human and normal challenge to live in a free world.
Keep it close to your heart!



"It will be an honour if I win!"