



One Woman's Wars

These photographs were taken by Carol Mann from 1994 to 2005 and cover war zones from Sarajevo (Bosnia) to Afghanistan, including Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan. They bear witness to the ongoing humanitarian work undertaken by Carol in these areas through her NGO FemAid, based in Paris.

Young woman with baby, Akkora Hatock refugee camp (Pakistan)



The mother must be about fifteen years old; this is her second child. It is likely that she will give birth to another six children, eight being the average number. Birthing is less dangerous in refugee camps than inside Afghanistan because minimal health services are available. Afghan infant mortality is staggering and maternal mortality is the highest in the world. This is why we are especially interested in organizing basic birth attendant training courses for women. One young mother of six signed up for one such course at Khewa camp starting fall 2005. She is twenty years old.

Jalozai refugee camp, December 2001 (Pakistan)



These photographs were taken in the notorious Jalozai camp shortly after the beginning of the American and allied bombings of Afghanistan in the wake of 9/11. People had fled in a panic over the Khyber Pass towards this huge, make-shift camp. The conditions were terrible, I saw women and children huddling in tiny precarious tents, filthy, hungry, cold despite the money which had supposedly been collected for the refugees. We sat with the women, listened to their woes, it was heart-breaking to feel so powerless in a such an ocean of sheer misery. Journalists and foreign visitors were no longer allowed into this camp, doubtless some authorities did not want anybody to testify as to how disastrous the situation was, so I arrived veiled, pretending to be someone's relation. Then a fierce bearded turbaned guard, wielding a Kalashnikov start to act in a threatening manner, it was time to bid 'Khoda Hafez'

Girl on crutches in Kobobian refugee camp (Pakistan)



This girl was so badly beaten by her husband and her mother-in-law that she had to have her leg amputated. She is grateful to RAWA for having provided her with crutches. Domestic violence, although deplored, does not rate as a crime in Pashtun society. Only an awareness of self-worth coming from consciousness-raising of women in this society dominated by patriarchal and Fundamentalist values could lead to eradication of such daily brutality.

Garbage trade in Kobobian refugee camp (Pakistan)



These scales are used to weigh the trash children carry back from Peshawar that will subsequently be sold to a trader. There are no adequate schools for these boys and their prospects are very bleak. It is easy to see how the Taliban originated in such camps, these bored, hungry kids could be easy to manipulate.

Woman with badly burned baby at the RAWA Malalai clinic in Rawalpindi (Pakistan) for Afghan refugees.



Urban refugees live in tiny hovels, often eight to a room, mostly children. Cooking is usually accomplished on the floor in a corner; there is so little space that accidents are frequent. This infant tripped over the fire, it is unlikely that she will survive. There is not enough appropriate medication or treatment. Of course, I felt bad taking this photograph, I explained to the mother that it was to raise awareness and to help prevent, even in a modest way, other such catastrophes taking place.

Little girls in Khewa refugee camp (Pakistan)



Before the age of four or five, little girls enjoy the same freedom as their brothers, so they run around the camp happily. After that, they progressively get confined to domestic space and endless chores.

Child labour (Pakistan).



This little boy, like so many like him, leaves the refugee camp at dawn with an empty bag and spends the day collecting trash. At night, processions of tiny shadows laden with heavy bags as big as they are line the highway plodding back to the camp, where the trash will be sorted and sold.

Doctor and patient in Quetta (Pakistan)



The doctor is examining a young boy in the RAWA dispensary in Quetta where we had brought some medical aid and organized a birth-attendant course. Because of dirt, the boy had developed a skin disease; the courageous doctor was having a hard time in explaining basics of hygiene to this family.

Scenes from the refugee camp



The little boy is running ahead while his mother watches. Spoilt and pampered in comparison to his sisters, his life will nevertheless be tough as he grows up, because of the absence of work or prospects in this society destroyed by twenty-five years of war.

Girls carrying loads in Khewa refugee camp (Pakistan)



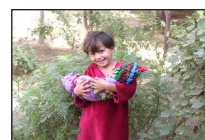
The population of refugee camps is rural, overwhelmingly Pashtun. Their life-style resembles that of Afghan villages, although they are beginning to be exposed to many influences coming from global society. Some things do not change. Thus, little boys play but girls generally practise for what will be their daily chores; they look after babies (usually the one born after them) carry loads on their heads, help their mothers before being married off at puberty to someone they usually meet for the first time on their wedding day.

Women on their way to the clinic in Khewa refugee camp (Pakistan)



These women are from outside the camp, so they are shrouded in their stifling blue nylon burka. Not to wear one would be shameful, because hands and faces would be revealed, they say. In a very conservative camp, I once asked an old Pashtun man why he would not let his daughter go to the vegetable stand down the alley. He answered: "If someone were to say, I saw the vendor touch your daughter's hand as he returned her change, my honour would be finished". And this could mean killing the hapless girl as well as the unfortunate vendor...

Girl holding baby in Khewa refugee camp (Pakistan)



The little girl is holding a tightly swaddled newborn baby; this is how babies are clad from Afghanistan to China, including parts of Eastern Europe. This was the custom in the West until the later 19th century.

Two little Pashtun girls in Khewa refugee camp (Pakistan)



This photograph is one in a sequence where a five year-old is teaching her younger siblings how to cover their heads. Wearing a permanent head scarf and then a burka takes considerable training; the awareness of female shame unworthiness and inferiority is drummed in at an early age

Kabul Street scenes (Afghanistan April 2005)



A typical unpaved street in Kabul, muddy or dusty according to season. The water pump is outside, not far from the open sewers and mounds of garbage. The little girl is showing off her New Year (Now Ruz) celebration dress and the man is wearing the only clothes he owns, an old military outfit.

Now Ruz in Kabul (Afghanistan April 2005)



At New Year on March 21st, kite flying competitions are the big event—all the more that the Taliban forbade them, fearing that kites might land in people's courtyard and the unwitting kite-runner catch a glance, (Allah forbid!) of an unveiled female figure... There may be open sewers, abject poverty and lack of medical care, but mobile phones have reached the Afghan market in a big way.

Kabul Street scenes (Afghanistan April 2005)



Since the Taliban have been ousted, the main change is that men have shorn their beards and are now wearing Western jackets and trousers. Women, however, still don the burka as soon as they leave their homes. Indeed, this costume is ubiquitous in Afghanistan and in the border area with Pakistan—the result of social and family pressures, especially in middle to lower classes. A student told me about a university professor arriving on the Kabul campus in her burka. Women still have a very hard time getting education or work, and are largely confined to the domestic space.

Baby Zaland (Pakistan)



This is my lovely god-son Zaland Khan born in January 2005 with his grand mother and cousins in a Pathan village; his eyes are lined with Kohl like many babies in this area as it is thought that this will protect his eyes and keep evil spirits away. The level of poverty of rural communities is comparable to that of the neighbouring refugee camps, but unfortunately there is no solidarity between the communities. Zaland's journalist father has always been a great supporter of ours.

Girls studying in Khewa refugee camp (Pakistan)



Female literacy makes a major difference. It has been proven that it positively influences maternal and infantile mortality and improves the life of the whole community. It also brings about political awareness. Afghan women have participated in elections and are eager to get involved with the modernization of Afghanistan. They know that only a strong state can effect lasting change on the patriarchal norms that oppress them.

Children at a brick kiln near Khewa refugee camp



When I saw the endless brick kilns in this barren landscape, I felt that this was Egypt in the days of slavery and pyramid-building. Children and skeletal donkeys toil alongside men, day after day under the merciless summer sun.

Waiter in Afghan 'tchaikhana' (Afghanistan)



This was taken at a stop on the mountain road from the Khyber pass to Kabul. Travellers have been stopping here for centuries to eat, drink tea (hence the name 'tchaikhana', tea-house), sometimes collapse for days on end in opium-induced torpor. Nobody asks you anything, not even a fierce black turbaned Taliban look-alike growling in a corner, just outside the picture-plane. Time stops here in the landscape filled with huge boulders, reaching towards the shrill blue sky.

Newly married couple in Kobobian refugee camp (Pakistan)



These may be luckier than most because they are of the same age; there is often a difference of twenty to thirty years as men must raise and borrow the money to pay a steep 'bride-price' (sometimes known as 'milk-price') to the girl's family. This couple probably met on their wedding day, according to local custom and lives in a tiny mud house with about ten other relatives sharing the room.

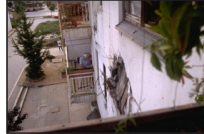
Bosnia, August 1994

Amer in Dobrinja, a suburb of Sarajevo



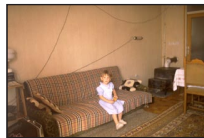
When Serbian shells began to rain on their house, Amer's mother Aida, grabbed each son by the hand and started running. She was not able to salvage anything. Amer, like so many children who had undergone the same experience, remained in shock for a long time.

Gardening in Dobrinja, a suburb of Sarajevo



A bomb had recently torn out the side of this man's house; but nevertheless, this did not deter him from watering his plants and keeping the daily miracle of life going.

Little girl in Dobrinja a suburb of Sarajevo



Many people in Dobrinja had lost all their possessions and did not have any photographs of themselves. There were no films to be bought in town and development was impossible. I embarked on taking photographs of whoever asked me to and then sent them copies via UNPROFOR. This child and her family were living in this makeshift home belonging to a Serbian family which had left town. Their own apartment had been shelled in the early days of the war.

Emina in the destroyed Sarajevo library



Right at the beginning of the war, Serbian planes had bombed this prestigious library, destroying not just a beautiful building but also priceless manuscripts and books, indeed the memory and documented history of the different cultures that had made up Bosnia.

Azra in the trenches of Dobrinja, a suburb of Sarajevo



My heroic friend Azra reorganized education in this suburb, taking over every basement and shed to set up classrooms. Here she is taking me through the trenches to see the destroyed school of her neighbourhood. Azra and I worked hard to organize the rebuilding of the Skender Kulenovic school in Dobrinja, today one of the most beautiful schools in the Balkans, built with Swiss, EEC and French support.

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