



Eighty per cent of Kabul is in ruins – the sight of hideously mangled buildings a silent testament to the grotesque brutality of the war.



# I have sore eyes

I had to leave without it. It was a Zinet, a Soviet camera that my father had brought back from his travels for me; a mad luxury for a child of Kabul who dreamt only of living in images. I was sixteen years old and had to flee Afghanistan like a thief.

Months of travelling followed. A route without images, a black hole. I needed an objective to escape it. Chance encounters gave me that. The discovery of the world through photography showed me that my lost expression was no longer alone.

I had to set off again. But where to? The question did not present itself: wherever the dead speak nonsense, wherever misery spreads on beaches of silence. Wherever, too, life overflows on itself, crude, nude. In Manila, on the steaming mountains of filth or in the swamps surrounding the shanty towns; in a refugee camp lost in central

Africa, when children dance under the stars; among nomads of every colour, of every ethnic group, these barefooted noblemen who speak of humanity when you touch its soul; so near to an embraced life, and sometimes so close to the life that burns. Before these misinterpretations, I stand enraged, exultant, and possess the wild desire to open the eyes of those who have seen nothing.

What use is photography? On the road fleeing Kabul, I remember a sea of white flags floating on a village turned graveyard. I do not know why I have kept this image of aberrant disaster so sharply – in the name of whom? In the name of what? But it resonates in my eye like the echo of a reality.

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Lost generations:  
The eyes of young and old speak of lost time in Afghanistan.



Room with a view: A blasted shell-hole provides a mother and child with a window on the apocalyptic world outside.



Innocence is a luxury denied to Afghan children — child's play can lead to shattered lives and limbs — this young boy manages a smile despite losing both his legs in a land-mine injury. Last year, the ICRC recorded 2,000 landmine victims in seven major hospitals in Afghanistan, one of the most densely mine-infested countries in the world.



The carcasses of Russian tanks which still litter the countryside have been ingeniously re-shaped by the Afghans into agricultural tools to till the land — a powerful symbol also of hope and peace.



After tough negotiations, women are still treated in ICRC field hospitals — everybody has a fundamental right to equal access to health care.