



WE AFGHAN WOMEN

60' documentary


3D PRODUZIONI

A photographer, a journalist, a filmmaker, an activist, a mayor, a sportswoman, an entrepreneur, an educator. Normal professions that have become dangerous and forbidden in the country where they lived: Afghanistan. **Seven Afghan women** are the protagonists of this documentary: they and the images (**never-before-seen photos and videos**) they took during the years they spent in Afghanistan. We travelled all over Europe (Italy, Switzerland, France, Germany) to meet them and they told us about the life they have lived during these 20 years of freedom from Sharia law. They were able to study, travel, work, listen to music. To have a dream and follow it. To have a vision beyond the burka and to pursue it. To have a place to live and breathe. A path that is still for a privileged few, but which, with the opening of schools to girls, was becoming a long, slow road to gender equality and equal rights. But this conquest of normality in their country would have been their undoing if they had not escaped in time. In those hellish days, from Kabul airport, in front of the whole world.

Under the Taliban regime, women are not allowed to do any of their jobs. Like a pinball machine gone mad, these seven women have been forced to flee, finding temporary homes all over the world, in countries and cities that have welcomed them. We met them to get to know them, to hear their stories, the stories of their mothers and grandmothers, so that they, and the more than 14 million Afghan women and girls, are not forgotten when the news broadcasts end. In addition to their personal stories, we discussed with them some of the larger issues in the history of their country.





These are the key words in their stories:

BEAUTY: The eyes of children on the street, Zahra Ahmadi's interview: "Now I don't know where those eyes are."

INVADERS: "So every time we got up to build, there was always a new (political) game to bring us down," Sahraa Karimi's interview.

GENDER: "I think the Taliban are erasing women from society, forcing women to be invisible," Sahraa Karimi's interview. "In Kabul, women speak from the walls," Shamisia's mural.

HOMELAND: "If you see Afghanistan on the world map, it means we are part of the world," Sahraa Karimi's interview.

ROOTS: "I was floating between heaven and earth, because I did not have those roots keeping my feet on the ground. Afghanistan was what I was missing, my roots," Zahra Ahmadi's interview.

ESCAPE: "The evacuation of the most educated, intellectual, talented, brightest part of the Afghan population... They left, especially the women, many artists, entrepreneurs, civil activists, directors, writers... they left," Sahraa Karimi's interview.

FUTURE: "I want to hope again, I am not ready to be a refugee again," Roya Heydar's interview. "I don't want to be the only one saved," said Zaha Ahmadi, an entrepreneur who has just arrived in Rome. "I want to be the one who can share her way out of the country with the others who stayed behind! Help me."

BODY: "They have massacred our people, they have kidnapped many children, they have sold girls as child brides to their men. It's a humanitarian crisis, but the world is silent. They ban all forms of art. I and other filmmakers could be next on their blacklist." Sahraa Karimi's interview.

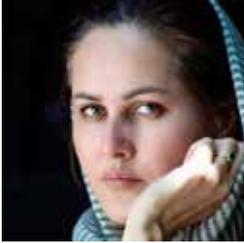
MASCHILISM: "They do not believe in the emancipation of women because they are afraid of the independent woman, because they are afraid of the educated woman, and because they are afraid of the woman who knows how to articulate her thoughts and choose her destiny," Sahraa Karimi's interview.

THE EIGHT AFGHAN WOMEN PROTAGONISTS



Sahraa Karimi

Sahraa Karimi is an Afghan filmmaker and the first female president of the Afghan Film Organisation. She has directed 30 short films, 3 documentaries and a feature film 'Hava, Maryam, Ayesha' which had its world premiere at the 76th Venice Film Festival.



Zarifa Ghafari

An Afghan activist and politician, Zarifa Ghafari became the mayor of Maidan Shahr, the capital of Afghanistan's Wardak province, in November 2019. She is one of the few female mayors in Afghanistan, and the youngest to be appointed at the age of 26. She is known for her efforts to promote women's rights in Afghanistan. She was selected by the US Secretary of State as an International Woman of Courage in 2020. She has survived three attempts on her life.



Pashtana Zalmi Khan Durrani

Pashtana Durrani has helped educate hundreds of Afghan women through her non-profit organisation LEARN, which she founded in 2018. She is the youngest teacher in Afghanistan to receive the Malala Fund Education Champion Award. Now in hiding from the Taliban in an undisclosed location, she has said she will continue to educate women and girls despite the danger. Durrani calls on the international community to stand with women and girls who cannot leave the country and fear that the few rights they have gained will slip away.



Roya Heydari

Afghan photographer Roya Heydari worked with Première Urgence Internationale in the field in December 2019, spending two weeks in the eastern regions of the country, from Nangarhar to Nuristan. She documented the NGO's activities through a selection of powerful images.





Zahra Ahmadi



Entrepreneur, sister of Venice-based Hamed Ahmadi, founder of Orient Experience, a restaurant managed by political refugees and asylum seekers. She participated in anti-Taliban protests as an activist, so she was afraid of what the return of the jihadist group might mean for her. She was among the thousands of people at Hamid Karzai International Airport trying to board one of the departing military flights.

Samira Asghari

Samira Asghari has been a member of the International Olympic Committee for Afghanistan since 2018. When she was elected at the age of 24, Asghari became the first representative from Afghanistan and one of the youngest members ever to join the IOC.



Amina



Manager of the Women For Business Hub, a project launched by Nove Onlus in Kabul in collaboration with an Afghan NGO. They are the girls evacuated from Kabul thanks to the red handkerchiefs on their wrists. From 2014 to 2020, the centre offered free training to more than 2,500 Afghan women aged between 18 and 35. Now the association is organising a support and integration network in Italy for people evacuated from Kabul, but it is not abandoning Afghanistan.

Mahbouba Seraj

Journalist and Afghan women's rights activist, co-founder of a number of organisations tackling corruption, women's rights and children's rights. As founder of the non-profit Afghan Women's Network, she has worked to protect children's health, fight corruption and empower victims of domestic violence. When the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, Seraj refused to flee the country and decided to stay in Kabul to continue working with women and children.



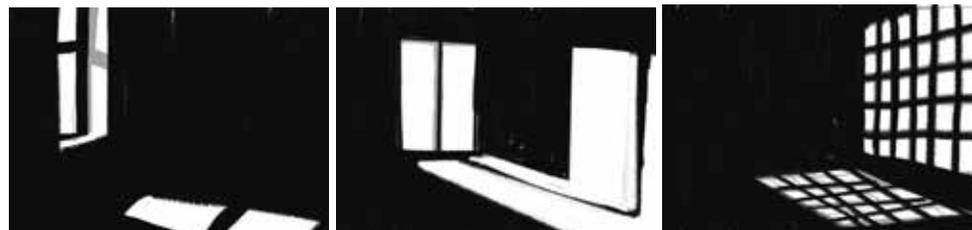
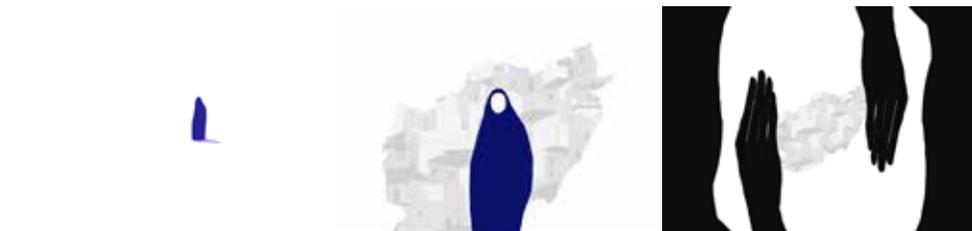
DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Our documentary has chosen to give the floor only to Afghan women, and to photographs and images taken by them, most of them never published before.

They speak in front of two cameras that focus on their faces, unhindered by the burqa they would be expected to wear in their country. The use of cinematographic lenses highlights the features of these young, striking, beautiful women with bold, determined faces, which the photography emphasises.

But there is always a window behind them, a blurred light that makes the viewer think of open space and air. Because they are outsiders speaking to a world that is listening, they have the freedom to express themselves and ask for help and solidarity for those left behind in a country that is now dark again for women. Indeed, darkness is the context of the documentary's only interview with an activist who is still a refugee in an Afghan village. Because her freedom of speech and her struggle can only take place in hiding.

The images we have chosen to tell the story of Afghanistan also come from two of these women: the director and the photographer we interviewed. And we also rely on the creativity of a young illustrator, this time Italian, who listened to their stories and illustrated them, where poetry and imagination are stronger than any real image. Emotions, thoughts and memories reappear through animated drawings: a series of evocative images that accompany the testimonies of the protagonists and give the viewer a visual representation of their stories. Places of memory, suspended between the real and the imaginary, reconstructed in black and white, the dominant colours of the narrative. In order to make the emotion of their stories concrete and informative, we decided not to use voice-overs, but to use some graphics to give the historical dimension to what is being told: for example, that there are 14 million girls in Afghanistan, that 80% of them are affected by restrictions on education, and that this means that illiteracy will reach 90% in the next ten years. That this will wipe out the progress made in the last 17 years, when the number of girls in school went from 0 to 2.5 million.



TEAM

DIDI GNOCCHI - producer and subject author

She began as a journalist for La Provincia Pavese in 1981, and in 1985 moved to Mediaset where for 20 years, as a correspondent, she dealt with reportage and investigations on neo-Nazism in Austria and Germany and then, for 10 years until 2001, she followed events in the former Soviet Union for Mediaset news. In 2000, she founded her own company, 3D Produzioni, with which she produced a long series of documentaries on history, art and culture broadcast by major international networks and shown in cinemas around the world, including: 'Hitler v. Picasso. The Nazi Obsession with Art,' 'Hermitage. The Power of Art,' 'Klimt & Schiele. Eros and Psyche.' In 2019, she authored and directed the documentary 'Citizen Rosi', winner of the Francesco Pasinetti' award at the 76th Venice Film Festival, and in 2020 of 'Il Nostro Eduardo', on the figure of Eduardo De Filippo.

ANNA MIGOTTO - writer and director

A television journalist since 1987, as a special correspondent for Mediaset, she has covered national and international news events in the television news and weekly in-depth reports: she has covered the conflicts in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and the uprisings in North Africa. She has worked extensively on organised crime and mafias. She has made many reportages on the phenomenon of migration, modern slavery radicalisation. She is co-author of the book 'Don't expect me alive. The banality of horror in the voices of young jihadists' (Einaudi Stile Libero). Among the journalistic awards she has received: 'Ilaria Alpi' award (2001) for the report on the lynching in Ramallah; 'Ernest Hemingway' journalism prize (2001) for reporting on the Middle East; 'Premio Ischia' (2003) for coverage of the war in Iraq; 'Ilaria Alpi' critics' prize (2011), for the reportage 'The Persecuted'. She is the author and director with Sabina Fedeli of the docu-film '#AnneFrank. Parallel Lives.'

SABINA FEDELI - writer and director

A television journalist since 1986, as a special correspondent, she has covered national and international news events for Mediaset in the news and in-depth weeklies: the war in former Yugoslavia, the coup in Moscow, the Algerian crisis in the 1990s, the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, the revolutions in North Africa. She has edited several investigations on violence against women and environmental pollution, and in-depth reports on immigration and Islamic fundamentalism.

In 2003 she won the 'Ilaria Alpi' prize for the in-depth special 'Focus and Run', in 2007 the 'Marco Luchetta Journalism Award' for the report 'The House of Horror. Honour killing in Palestine', and in 2011 the 'Ilaria Alpi' critics' prize for the reportage 'The Persecuted'. She is the author and director with Anna Migotto of the docu-film '#AnneFrank. Parallel Lives.'





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