

**ONE DAY  
AN ELEPHANT  
STEPPED  
ON AN  
ANT HOUSE**

The U.S. and NATO forces have been in Afghanistan for 12 years now. Collected here are interviews with Afghan children—mostly under 12 years old—whose lives have spanned those years.

Qadrat, 12 years old, Shamsa Village Orphanage  
*Interviewed by Yasin Farid, PARSA's National Director*

*YF: What grade are you in?*

Q: I'm in the first grade. I was in the fourth grade in the government school. When I started private school and took the entrance exam exam, they placed me back. At the government school, I didn't learn very much.

*YF: Who is your best friend?*

Q: Qasim is my best friend. I became best friends with him because he helps me with my studies. I have a very difficult time learning, and he helps me.

*YF: How does he support you?*

Q: (Smiles) When the teacher brings me in front of the class, Qasim helps me answer the teacher's questions. That's how he became my best friend.

*YF: What did you do yesterday?*

Q: I don't remember. (Then, his friend Qasim whispers into his ear.) Oh, I woke up, went to school, ate, etc.

Qasim, 12 years old, Shamsa Village Orphanage  
*Interviewed by Yasin Farid*

*YF: What did you do yesterday: from when you woke up to when you slept?*

Q: When I woke up, I brushed my teeth. Then, I had breakfast, got dressed and went to school. When I returned from school, I had lunch and rested for awhile. I worked on my homework and changed into my pajamas, and then, I went to bed.

*YF: If you were an animal which animal would you be?*

Q: A pigeon.

*YF: You like pigeons? Why would you like to be a pigeon?*

Q: (giggles)

*YF: Have you seen a pigeon?*

Q: Yes.

*YF: What color was it?*

Q: White and black.

*YF: Where did you see a pigeon?*

Q: In the sky.

*YF: If you were a pigeon, where would you go?*

Q: I'd go for a chakar. (Chakar in Dari means roughly "outing" or "go for enjoyment")

*YF: Where would you take your chakar? To the mountains, America, where?*

Q: To the jungles.

*YF: Okay. Now, another question. Which country do you like most?*

Q: America

*YF: What do you think is in America?*

Q: I don't know.

*YF: Afghanistan is a country. What is there here? Jungles, mountains, etc. And what do you think about America?*

Q: I think it has tall houses. It's peaceful. It's green. It's beautiful.

*YF: If you lived in America, what job would you want to do?*

Q: An astronaut.

*YF: Have you ever seen an astronaut on TV?*

Q: I read about astronauts in a book.

Basir, 12 years old, Shamsa Village Orphanage

*Interviewed by Yasin Farid*

*YF: Tell me about yourself.*

B: My name is Basir. I was also in the fourth grade in the government school, but they moved me back to the second grade after I took the exam for private school.

*YF: What are you afraid of?*

B: I'm afraid of ghosts and jinns (supernatural creatures in Islamic mythology).

*YF: Are you afraid of anything else? Lions, fighting dogs (in Afghanistan, dog fighting with huge locally-bred mastiffs is a popular sport and is why most Afghans are afraid of dogs.), any other animals?*

B: (shakes head no) I'm not afraid of any animals.

*YF: Do you like animals?*

B: No. I dislike all animals, and I dislike snakes the most.

*YF: Why don't you like animals?*

B: I just don't like them.

*YF: Do you know any jokes?*

B: Yes. There was a Mullah (Mullah Nasrudin, the character in a great number of Middle Eastern folk tales and jokes) and

there were three foreigners. The foreigners wanted to learn Dari from the Mullah. On the first day, the Mullah taught them the words "We are happy," but they didn't learn the meaning of the words. They just kept saying, "We are happy. We are happy." Then the next day, the Mullah taught them "We are three fat men. We are three fat men." Then, the third day, he taught them "We killed. We killed." On the fourth day, when they came to class, they learned that the Mullah had died. The police came and started asking questions. To the first question, the foreigners said, "We are happy. We are happy." To the second question, the foreigners said "We killed. We killed." Then when the police asked them who did the killing, they said "We three fat men."

*YF: Tell us another joke.*

B: Mullah Nasrudin's neighbor's chicken was lost, and when the neighbor came to knock on the door of the Mullah to ask if he had seen their chicken, the Mullah said, "Yes, I saw your chicken. It's taking a sauna in the tub in our kitchen."

Hekmatullah, 12 years old, Shamsa Village Orphanage  
*Interviewed by Yasin Farid*

*YF: Tell me a funny story.*

H: I haven't seen anything funny.

*YF: Tell me something happy.*

H: It was funny when Qadrat was in front of the class, and Qasim helped him cheat in answering the teacher's questions. That was a happy and funny story.

*YF: What food do you like the best?*

H: Burgers.

*YF: Why do you like burgers more than other foods?*

H: Because they're more delicious than other foods.

*YF: What kind of burgers do you like? American burgers, or Afghan "burgers" (popular street food made with mostly French fries, a few slices of egg, processed meat, and a little chopped cabbage/lettuce/tomatoes wrapped in a flat pita-like bread)?*

H: Eggs and meat, with some vegetables. After that, I like to have a coke.

Aisha, 17 years old, Shamsa Village Orphanage  
*Interviewed by Yasin Farid*

*YF: What are you scared of?*

A: Bugs, like cockroaches.

*YF: If you were the president of Afghanistan, what would you do?*

A: There are many facilities that exist in Afghanistan that people cannot use or have access to. I would like to make them available to everyone.

*YF: What facilities are you talking about?*

A: Schools, hospitals, factories.... There are a lot of things to be done.

Fatima, 17 years old, Shamsa Village Orphanage

*Interviewed by Yasin Farid*

*YF: What food do you like best?*

F: Potatoes.

*YF: What kind of potatoes do you like? Chips (French fries), potato stew, what type?*

F: Every type!

*YF: If you were going to be an animal, what animal would you be?*

F: (silent)

*YF: Do you like animals?*

F: No.

*YF: Okay another question. Which country do you really like?*

F: I don't know.

*YF: Do you like America?*

F: I don't know anything about any countries.

*YF: Do you know about Afghanistan?*

F: Yes.

Feroza, 15 years old, Shamsa Village Orphanage

*Interviewed by Yasin Farid*

*YF: What did you do yesterday from morning until night?*

F: When I woke up, I took ablutions and prayed. Then after that, we cleaned the house, went to the neighbor's house, where there are younger children, and cleaned their house. Then, we had a fun class, where we put on these fake nails. I had dinner.

*YF: You jumped suddenly to dinner. What happened to breakfast and lunch and everything else in between?*

*What did you have for dinner?*

F: We had potatoes that we made.

*YF: So Fatima was happy?*

F: (giggles)

*YF: What dishes can you make?*

F: I can make beans. I can make many different kinds of soups, ashaak, rice.

Farima, 15 years old, Shamsa Village Orphanage

*Interviewed by Yasin Farid*

*YF: What would you ask kids your age in America?*

F: They are happier because they have better lives. They go to school. They have parks. Everything is around them.

*YF: But what questions would you ask someone from America?*

F: I would ask her her name, what school she is going to, and what she wants to do when she graduates from school.

*YF: What else? If she were your friend, what would you ask her?*

F: What food do you like from the US?

*YF: If you were an animal what animal would you like to be?*

F: A house cat.

*YF: If you were a fish, what would you do?*

F: Obviously, I would swim.

*YF: Where would you swim to? Canada? America? Where?*

F: Turkey (giggles).

*YF: Why Turkey?*

F: Because. I've watched Turkish soap operas, and it seems that it is very beautiful there.

Naqibullah, 11 years old, Mazar e Sharif

*Interviewed by Abdul Basir Sarwari*

(Naqibullah's father is jobless and lost one of his legs in an accident 10 years back. He now has 3 sons and 4 daughters, who are all students. Naqibullah's mother is working as a cleaner in a house all day to earn money for their expenses).

*ABS: What will you be doing in 20 years?*

N: Working in cinema. I'm really into cinema and film.

*ABS: Where did the earth come from?*

N: From the sky and from God. I learned that from my religious teacher.

*ABS: Tell me a good joke.*

N: An American, a Russian, and a Pakistani were traveling on a ship in an ocean. Suddenly, a hungry crocodile came and ate the American and the Russian, but not the Pakistani. Someone asked the crocodile why it didn't eat the Pakistani. The crocodile replied, "Last year, I ate a Pakistani and I still have stomach problems, so this time I'm going to skip him."

*ABS: Tell me another good joke.*

N: One day, the Mullah Nasruddin was sitting on a chair, eating an egg. A passerby asked him, "Why are you sitting on a chair



eating an egg?" Nasruddin replied, "What? Am I supposed to sit on egg and eat a chair?"

*ABS: Tell me everything you did yesterday in detail.*

N: In the morning, I went to school, and after that, I came back and I did my homework. Then, I went to math class, took a short nap, and played with my neighbor's son, who is my friend. We share a yard. I also went to the market to purchase bread for dinner.

*ABS: Tell me a funny story about something that happened to you.*

N: Once, I played cops and robbers with my friends. We divided into two groups and used a plastic pistol. One group would run after the other in the streets and yards. Suddenly, one of our playmates acted as the police hero, which he learned from a Turkish TV show called Valley of the Wolf (one of the most popular TV shows in Afghanistan).

*ABS: What do you think of America?*

N: It is a big and developed country, which has everything: money, airplanes, cars, powerful actors and high buildings.

*ABS: Is there life on other planets? If so, what is it like?*

N: Yes, there are differently shaped people living on other planets. I saw it in the movies.

*ABS: What is the weirdest thing you ever saw?*

N: American tanks and military equipment, which are now seen in Afghanistan.

*ABS: What's the most important thing ever invented?*

N: Airplane.

*ABS: What would you do if you were president?*

N: I'd help the poor people, since I belong to a poor family.

*ABS: What is scary to you?*

N: I'm scared of war and suicide attacks.

*ABS: What question would you like to ask an American kid your age?*

N: How many toys they have.

Aizatullah, 11 years old, Mazar e Sharif

*Interviewed by Abdul Basir Sarwari*

*ABS: What advice would you give your parents?*

A: They should buy me a new bicycle.

*ABS: Tell me a good joke.*

A: Once upon a time, a boy fell off a roof and his stomach came apart and needed stitches (the word for stitches in Dari is the same as Coke). The doctor said he's going to need 17 stitches. Then, the injured boy shouted, "Please give me Fanta, instead of Coke."

*ABS: What will you be doing in 20 years?*

A: I'll be an engineer.

*ABS: Where did the earth come from?*

A: From the mountains.

*ABS: What is scary to you?*

A: I'm scared of lions.

Soma, 9 years old, Mazar e Sharif

*Interviewed by Abdul Basir Sarwari*

(Soma's father is a cobbler, who polishes and repairs people's shoes. He earns 10-20 AFN per shoes and lives in their relative's house.)

*ABS: Tell me a good joke.*

S: There was a young boy, who was very naughty, and his father told him that he was no longer allowed to step foot on the street. The boy accepted this, but the next day, he went out on the street anyway. Suddenly, he saw that his father was coming and he stood on his hands. His father asked him, "Why are you standing on your hands?" He replied, "You told me to not put my feet on the street."

*ABS: Tell me everything you did yesterday in detail.*

S: In the morning, I went to school, and after I came back, I did my homework. I helped my mother with housework. Then, I played with my friends next door and my sisters, and watched TV.

*ABS: What do you think of Americans?*

S: It is a country with black people and it always fights with Afghanistan.

*ABS: Is there life on other planets? If so, what is it like?*

S: Yes, living like us here on the earth.

*ABS: Why do some people have more money than others?*

S: Some people have big shops in the city and also have good business. They buy new cars and have a good house. They are bosses in an office or organization.

*ABS: What kind of animal would you be if you had to be one?*

S: I'd really like to be a kitten.

*ABS: What's the best age to be? Why?*

S: 20 years old. I like that age, and I'll know everything.

*ABS: What is scary to you?*

S: I'm scared of God.

*ABS: What question would you like to ask an American kid your age?*

S: Why are you American and Black?

Arsalan, 11 years old, Mazar e Sharif

*Interviewed by Abdul Basir Sarwari*

*ABS: What advice would you give your parents?*

A: Buy a car.

*ABS: Tell me a good joke.*

A: There was a man who had three children named Torachy (none of your business), Marachy (none of my business) and Aqal (Wisdom). He went to register two of them at school. When the principal of the school asked him to say his son's names, he said the first is none of your business and the second is none of my business. The principal become angry and asked him, "Do you have wisdom?" The man answered, "Yes, he's at home."

*ABS: What will you be doing in 20 years?*

A: I'll be a doctor.

*ABS: Do you have a nickname? How did you get it?*

A: Ziauddin, I got it from my father, it was his grandfather's name.

*ABS: What is scary to you?*

A: I'm scared of God, as he will see all the bad things I've done.

*ABS: What's your favorite food?*

A: Macaroons.

Qais, 12 years old

*Interviewed by Abdul Hakim*

*AH: What advice would you give your parents?*

Q: I'd tell them to be friendly, work together, help each other, be kind and supportive.

*AH: Tell me a good joke.*

Q: A man was in the bus station smoking. A woman came up to him and asked, "Does your family know that you are smoking?" The man replied, "Does your husband know that you are talking with a stranger?"

*AH: What is scary to you?*

Q: I'm scared of darkness, natural disasters, earthquakes, bombardment, and fighting.

*AH: What do you do on a perfect day?*

Q: I play football and volleyball with my friends in the playground near our house.

*AH: What's your favorite food?*

Q: I like Kabab, Kabuli and Mantoo.

Hakim, 8 years old, Nangarhar Province

*Interviewed by Ahmad Siar Ghafoori*

*ASG: What advice would you give your parents?*

H: I'd ask them to find a way for me to get me higher education abroad, so I can learn new technology and bring this technology to my home.

*ASG: Tell me a good joke.*

H: A girl asks her male teacher, "If I kissed to a boy what would happen?" The teacher responds, "It would mean that you are guilty of sin." The girl says, "What if I give him a very small kiss?" The teacher says, "You will still be guilty." The girl says, "And...if I give a kiss to the teacher?" The teacher says, "Oh, that means you want to go to heaven."

*ASG: What's the best age to be? Why?*

H: I wish I could go back to when I was little because there would no longer have to work. Just playing games, bringing water from outside to my home, feeding grass to my cows, and going to the bazaar.

*ASG: Where did the earth come from?*

H: Hahaha, I didn't know it was created before. It was always like this.

*ASG: Do you have a nickname? How did you get it?*

H: My nickname is Toha. I got this name from my uncle because during the time of the Taliban regime, the local police commander's name was Toha.

*ASG: What do you want from your next leader?*

H: I like Dr. Ashraf Ghani. My father and older brothers told me that they will vote for him because he is a very good person and has an education.

*ASG: What's your favorite food?*

H: I like meatballs (Kofta). At ceremonies and parties, I'm always eating meatballs.

Mohammad Moshtaq, 11 years old, Nangarhar province

*Interviewed By Ahmad Siar Ghafoori*

*ASG: Tell me a good joke.*

M: A person goes to take a bath. He sees the showerhead and thinks that it is a phone. He puts the showerhead to his ear, and when he presses the button on it, water comes out. Then, he says, "Ohhh, I think a flood has come to my village."

*ASG: What will you be doing in 20 years?*

M: I want to have job, so I can study because you need money to study.

*ASG: Where did the earth come from?*

M: It is a planet of the solar system that has been created by Allah (God).

*ASG: What is scary to you?*

M: I'm scared of a crocodiles because it can bite someone in water and out of water.

Arvin, 7 years old, Kabul  
*Interviewed by Sayed Ajmal Sadat*

*SAS: What do you do?*

A: I walk around Kabul to polish shoes.

*SAS: And do you give the money that you work for to your father or do you spend it?*

A: No, I give it to my father.

*SAS: Is he very serious?*

A: Hmmm, no.

*SAS: Do you sometimes tell jokes to you father?*

A: Yes, I do. He laughs a lot.

*SAS: Do you go to school?*

A: Yes, I do.

*SAS: What's your dream for your future?*

A: To become a good doctor.

*SAS: What is scary to you?*

A: When I go to home very late.

*SAS: Do people tease you on the way?*

A: No, but its dark, so I'm afraid. It's scary.

*SAS: What's your father doing?*

A: He works outside.

*SAS: Then why are you here to polish shoes?*

A: To help my father in daily expenses of our life.

*SAS: What's your favorite food?*

A: Ashak and fish.

Mashal, 11 years old, Kabul  
*Interviewed by Sayed Ajmal Sadat*

*SAS: Salaam, what's your name?*

M: Mashal

*SAS: Tell me about your favorite food.*

M: Bolani, Qabli, Mantoo

*SAS: And what is your dream for the future?*

M: To become a good soccer player. I love soccer.

*SAS: Who is your favorite player and team/club?*

M: Cristiano Ronaldo, Real Madrid.

*SAS: Do you play soccer now?*

M: Yeah, in the street with friends.

*SAS: Of your parents, which one do you love most? Father or mother?*

M: Haha, both.

*SAS: Do you ever stand on your father's shoulder?*

M: Haha, yes

*SAS: And what is his reaction?*

M: He doesn't say anything.

*SAS: What is scary to you?*

M: Insecurity.

*SAS: What would you do on a perfect day?*

M: We'd go to Qargha Lake or Paghman.

Abdulhay, 11 years old

*Interviewed by Safiullah Sultani*

*SS: Tell me a good joke.*

**A:** One day, an elephant stepped on an ant house, and the ants ended up all over the elephant's body. With a jolt, the elephant threw down all of the ants. Only one small ant, named Asghar, clung tight to the elephant's neck. All the ants on the bottom screamed, "That's right Asghar, kill him!"

*SS: What will you be doing in 20 years?*

**A:** I'll be a doctor.

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Design by Brett Yasko.

Conflict Kitchen is a take-out restaurant that only serves cuisine from countries with which the United States government is in conflict. Each Conflict Kitchen iteration is augmented by events, performances and discussions about the culture, politics and issues within each country upon which we focus. The restaurant rotates identities in response to current geopolitical events. Conflict Kitchen is funded primarily through food sales. Additional support comes from The Sprout Fund, The Heinz Endowment and The Studio for Creative Inquiry.

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