and outspoken critic of the Taliban, whose only son had been shot dead by them; and the chief minister of our province, Haider Hoti, with whom I had appeared on talk-show discussions. None of them was allowed in.

'Rest assured Malala will not die,' Hoti told people. 'She still has lots to do.'

Then around 3 p.m. in the afternoon two British doctors arrived by helicopter from Rawalpindi. Dr Javid Kayani and Dr Fiona Reynolds were from hospitals in Birmingham and happened to be in Pakistan advising the army on how to set up the country's first liver transplant programme. Our country is full of shocking statistics, not just on education, and one of them is that one in seven children in Pakistan gets hepatitis, largely because of dirty needles, and many die of liver disease. General Kayani was determined to change this, and the army had once again stepped in where the civilians had failed. He had asked the doctors to brief him on their progress before flying home, which happened to be the morning after I had been shot. When they went in to see him he had two televisions on, one tuned to a local channel in Urdu and the other to Sky News in English, with news of my shooting.

The army chief and the doctor were not related despite sharing a surname but knew each other well so the general told Dr Javid he was worried about the conflicting reports he was receiving and asked him to assess me before flying back to the UK. Dr Javid, who is an emergency care consultant at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, agreed, but asked to take Dr Fiona as she is from Birmingham Children's Hospital and a specialist in children's intensive care. She was nervous about going to Peshawar, which has become a no-go area for foreigners, but when she heard that I was a campaigner for girls' education she was happy to help as she herself had been lucky to go to a good school and train to become a doctor.

Colonel Junaid and the hospital director were not pleased to see them. There was some argument until Dr Javid made it clear who had sent them. The British doctors were not happy with what they found. First they turned on a tap to wash their hands and discovered there was no water. Then Dr Fiona checked the machines and levels and muttered something to Dr Javid. She asked when my blood pressure had last been checked. 'Two hours ago,' came the reply. She said it needed to be checked all the time and asked a nurse why there was no arterial line. She also complained that my carbon dioxide level was far too low.

My father was glad he didn't hear what she had told Dr Javid. She had said I was 'salvageable' – I had had the right surgery at the right time – but my chances of recovery were now being compromised by the aftercare. After neurosurgery it is essential to monitor breathing and gas exchange, and CO2 levels are supposed to be kept in the normal range. That's what all the tubes and machines were monitoring. Dr Javid said it was 'like flying an aircraft – you can only do it using the right instruments', and even if the hospital had them they weren't being used properly. Then they left in their helicopter because it is dangerous to be in Peshawar after dark.

Among the visitors who came and were not allowed in was Rehman Malik, the interior minister. He had brought with him a passport for me. My father thanked him but he was very upset. That night when he went back to the army hostel, he took the passport from his pocket and gave it to my mother. 'This is Malala's, but I don't know whether it's to go abroad or to the heavens,' he said. They both cried. In their bubble inside the hospital they did not realise that my story had travelled all round the world and that people were calling for me to be sent abroad for treatment.

My condition was deteriorating and my father now rarely picked up his calls. One of the few he