

and who would pay for it. Dr Javid suggested taking up an offer from the Royal Air Force as they were used to transporting wounded soldiers from Afghanistan, but General Kayani refused. He called Dr Javid for a late-night meeting at his house – the general keeps late hours – and explained, chain-smoking as usual, that he did not want any foreign military involved. There were already too many conspiracy theories floating around about my shooting, people saying I was a CIA agent and such things, and the army chief did not want to further fuel them. This left Dr Javid in a difficult position. The British government had offered assistance but needed a formal request from the Pakistan government. But my government was reluctant to ask for fear of loss of face. Fortunately at this point the ruling family of the United Arab Emirates stepped in. They offered their private jet, which had its own on-board hospital. I was to be flown out of Pakistan for the first time in my life in the early hours of Monday, 15 October.

My parents had no idea of any of these negotiations though they knew discussions were under way to move me overseas. Naturally they assumed that wherever I was sent, they would accompany me. My mother and brothers had no passports or documentation. On Sunday afternoon my father was informed by the colonel that I would be leaving the next morning for the UK and only he was to accompany me, not my mother or my brothers. He was told there was a problem arranging their passports and that for security reasons he should not even tell the rest of my family he was going.

My father shares everything with my mother and there was no way he would keep such a thing secret. He told her the news with a heavy heart. My mother was sitting with uncle Faiz Mohammad, who was furious and worried about her and my brothers' security. 'If she's on her own with two boys in Mingora, anything could happen to them!'

My father called the colonel. 'I have informed my family and they are very unhappy. I cannot leave them.' This caused a big problem because I was a minor so couldn't be sent alone and many people got involved to try and convince my father to come with me, including Colonel Junaid, Dr Javid and Dr Fiona. My father does not respond well to being pushed and remained firm even though it was clear that by now he was creating havoc. He explained to Dr Javid, 'My daughter is now in safe hands and going to a safe country. I can't leave my wife and sons alone here. They are at risk. What has happened to my daughter has happened and now she is in God's hands. I am a father – my sons are as important to me as my daughter.'

Dr Javid asked to see my father privately. 'Are you sure this is the only reason you are not coming?' he asked. He wanted to make sure no one was pressuring him.

'My wife told me, "You can't leave us,"' my father said. The doctor put a hand on his shoulder and reassured my father that I would be taken care of and he could trust him. 'Isn't it a miracle you all happened to be here when Malala was shot?' said my father.

'It is my belief God sends the solution first and the problem later,' replied Dr Javid.

My father then signed an 'in loco parentis' document making Dr Fiona my guardian for the trip to the UK. My father was in tears as he gave her my passport and took her hand.

'Fiona, I trust you. Please take care of my daughter.'

Then my mother and father came to my bedside to say goodbye. It was around 11 p.m. when they saw me for the last time in Pakistan. I could not speak, my eyes were shut and it was only my breath that reassured them I was still alive. My mother cried, but my father tried to comfort her as he felt I was now out of danger. All those deadlines they'd given at the beginning – when they said the next twenty-four hours were dangerous, forty-eight were crucial, seventy-two were critical – had all