

When he met his fellow activists, particularly his old friends Ahmad Shah, Mohammad Farooq and Zahid Khan, I often went with him. Ahmad Shah also had a school, where Mohammad Farooq worked, and they would sometimes gather on his lawn. Zahid Khan was a hotel owner and had a big *hujra*. When they came to our house I would bring them tea then sit quietly listening as they discussed what to do. ‘Malala is not just the daughter of Ziauddin,’ they would say; ‘she is the daughter of all of us.’

They went back and forth to Peshawar and Islamabad and gave lots of interviews on the radio, particularly to the Voice of America and the BBC, taking turns so there would always be one of them available. They told people that what was happening in Swat was not about Islam. My father said the Taliban presence in Swat was not possible without the support of some in the army and the bureaucracy. The state is meant to protect the rights of its citizens, but it’s a very difficult situation when you can’t tell the difference between state and non-state and can’t trust the state to protect you against non-state.

Our military and ISI are very powerful and most people did not like to voice these things publicly, but my father and many of his friends were not scared. ‘What you are doing is against our people and against Pakistan,’ he would say. ‘Don’t support Talibanisation, it’s inhuman. We are told that Swat is being sacrificed for the sake of Pakistan, but no one and nothing should be sacrificed for the state. A state is like a mother, and a mother never deserts or cheats her children.’

He hated the fact that most people would not speak up. In his pocket he kept a poem written by Martin Niemöller, who had lived in Nazi Germany.

First they came for the communists,
and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a communist.
Then they came for the socialists,
and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn’t speak out because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Catholics,
and I didn’t speak out because I was not a Catholic.
Then they came for me,
and there was no one left to speak for me.

I knew he was right. If people were silent nothing would change.

At school my father organised a peace march and encouraged us to speak out against what was happening. Moniba put it well. ‘We Pashtuns are a religion-loving people,’ she said. ‘Because of the Taliban, the whole world is claiming we are terrorists. This is not the case. We are peace-loving. Our mountains, our trees, our flowers – everything in our valley is about peace.’ A group of us girls gave an interview on ATV Khyber, the only privately owned Pashto television channel, about girls dropping out of school due to militancy. Teachers helped us beforehand on how to respond to questions. I wasn’t the only one to be interviewed. When we were eleven and twelve, we did them together, but as we turned thirteen or fourteen my friends’ brothers and fathers didn’t allow them because they had entered puberty and should observe purdah and also they were afraid.

One day I went on Geo, which is one of the biggest news channels in our country. There was a wall of screens in their office. I was astonished to see so many channels. Afterwards I thought, *The media needs interviews. They want to interview a small girl, but the girls are scared, and even if they’re*