told my father. The punishments decreed by Fazlullah's *shura* included public whippings, which we had never seen before. One of my father's friends told him he had seen three men publicly flogged after the *shura* had found them guilty of involvement in the abduction of two women. A stage was set up near Fazlullah's centre, and after going to hear him give Friday prayers, hundreds of people gathered to watch the floggings, shouting '*Allahu akbar!* ' – 'God is great!' with each lash. Sometimes Fazlullah appeared galloping in on a black horse.

His men stopped health workers giving polio drops, saying the vaccinations were an American plot to make Muslim women infertile so that the people of Swat would die out. 'To cure a disease before its onset is not in accordance with sharia law,' said Fazlullah on the radio. 'You will not find a single child to drink a drop of the vaccine anywhere in Swat.'

Fazlullah's men patrolled the streets looking for offenders against his decrees just like the Taliban morality police we had heard about in Afghanistan. They set up volunteer traffic police called Falcon Commandos, who drove through the streets with machine guns mounted on top of their pick-up trucks.

Some people were happy. One day my father ran into his bank manager. 'One good thing Fazlullah is doing is banning ladies and girls from going to the Cheena Bazaar, which saves us men money,' he said. Few spoke out. My father complained that most people were like our local barber, who one day grumbled to my father that he had only eighty rupees in his till, less than a tenth of what his takings used to be. Just the day before the barber had told a journalist that the Taliban were good Muslims.

After Mullah FM had been on air for about a year, Fazlullah became more aggressive. His brother Maulana Liaquat, along with three of Liaquat's sons, were among those killed in an American drone attack on the madrasa in Bajaur at the end of October 2006. Eighty people were killed including boys as young as twelve, some of whom had come from Swat. We were all horrified by the attack and people swore revenge. Ten days later a suicide bomber blew himself up in the army barracks at Dargai, on the way from Islamabad to Swat, and killed forty-two Pakistani soldiers. At that time suicide bombings were rare in Pakistan – there were six in total that year – and it was the biggest attack that had ever been carried out by Pakistani militants.

At Eid we usually sacrifice animals like goats or sheep. But Fazlullah said, 'On this Eid two-legged animals will be sacrificed.' We soon saw what he meant. His men began killing khans and political activists from secular and nationalist parties, especially the Awami National Party (ANP). In January 2007 a close friend of one of my father's friends was kidnapped in his village by eighty masked gunmen. His name was Malak Bakht Baidar. He was from a wealthy khan family and the local vice president of the ANP. His body was found dumped in his family's ancestral graveyard. His legs and arms had all been broken. It was the first targeted killing in Swat, and people said it was because he had helped the army find Taliban hideouts.

The authorities turned a blind eye. Our provincial government was still made up of mullah parties who wouldn't criticise anyone who claimed to be fighting for Islam. At first we thought we were safe in Mingora, the biggest town in Swat. But Fazlullah's headquarters were just a few miles away, and even though the Taliban were not near our house they were in the markets, in the streets and the hills. Danger began to creep closer.

During Eid we went to our family village as usual. I was in my cousin's car, and as we drove through a river where the road had been washed away we had to stop at a Taliban checkpoint. I was in the back with my mother. My cousin quickly gave us his music cassettes to hide in our purses. The Taliban were dressed in black and carried Kalashnikovs. They told us, 'Sisters, you are bringing