

shame. You must wear burqas.'

When we arrived back at school after Eid, we saw a letter taped to the gate. 'Sir, the school you are running is Western and infidel,' it said. 'You teach girls and have a uniform that is un-Islamic. Stop this or you will be in trouble and your children will weep and cry for you.' It was signed, '*Fedayeen* of Islam'.

My father decided to change the boys' uniform from shirt and trousers to shalwar kamiz, baggy pyjama-like trousers and a long shirt. Ours remained a royal-blue shalwar kamiz with a white *dupatta*, or headscarf, and we were advised to keep our heads covered coming in and out of school.

His friend Hidayatullah told him to stand firm. 'Ziauddin, you have charisma; you can speak up and organise against them,' he said. 'Life isn't just about taking in oxygen and giving out carbon dioxide. You can stay there accepting everything from the Taliban or you can make a stand against them.'

My father told us what Hidayatullah had said. He then wrote a letter to the *Daily Azadi*, our local newspaper. 'To the *Fedayeen* of Islam [or Islamic sacrificers], this is not the right way to implement Islam,' he wrote. 'Please don't harm my children because the God you believe in is the same God they pray to every day. You can take my life but please don't kill my schoolchildren.' When my father saw the newspaper he was very unhappy. The letter had been buried on an inside page and the editor had published his name and the address of the school, which my father had not expected him to do. But lots of people called to congratulate him. 'You have put the first stone in standing water,' they said. 'Now we will have the courage to speak.'