

Text B: Malala Yousafzai

In 2007, when Malala was ten years old, the Taliban began to control the Swat Valley and quickly became the dominant socio-political force throughout much of northwestern Pakistan. Girls were banned from attending school, and cultural activities like dancing and watching television were prohibited. Suicide attacks were widespread, and the Taliban made its opposition to a proper education for girls a cornerstone of its terror campaign. By the end of 2008, the Taliban had destroyed some 400 schools.

Determined to go to school and with a firm belief in her right to an education, Malala stood up to the Taliban. Alongside her father, Malala quickly became a critic of their tactics. "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?" she once said on Pakistani TV.

Pakistan's war with the Taliban was fast approaching, and on May 5, 2009, Malala became an internally displaced person (IDP), after having been forced to leave her home and seek safety hundreds of miles away. On her return, after weeks of being away from Swat, Malala continued her public campaign for her right to go to school. Her voice grew louder, and over the course of the next three years, she and her father became known throughout Pakistan for their determination to give Pakistani girls access to a free quality education. Her activism resulted in a nomination for the International Children's Peace Prize in 2011. That same year, she was awarded Pakistan's National Youth Peace Prize. But, not everyone supported and welcomed her campaign to bring about change in Swat. On the morning of October 9, 2012, 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai was shot by the Taliban.

Seated on a bus heading home from school, Malala was talking with her friends about schoolwork. Two members of the Taliban stopped the bus. A young bearded Talib asked for Malala by name, and fired three shots at her. One of the bullets entered and exited her head and lodged in her shoulder. Malala was seriously wounded. That same day, she was airlifted to a Pakistani military hospital in Peshawar and four days later to an intensive care unit in Birmingham, England.

Once she was in the United Kingdom, Malala was taken out of a medically induced coma. Though she would require multiple surgeries, including repair of a facial nerve to fix the paralyzed left side of her face, she had suffered no major brain damage. In March 2013, after weeks of treatment and therapy, Malala was able to begin attending school in Birmingham.

After the shooting, her incredible recovery and return to school resulted in a global outpouring of support for Malala. In 2013, she published her first book, an autobiography entitled "I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban." On October 10, 2013, in acknowledgement of her work, the European Parliament awarded Malala the prestigious Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

In October 2014, Malala, along with Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi, was named a Nobel Peace Prize winner. At age 17, she became the youngest person to receive this prize. Malala reaffirmed, "This award is not just for me. It is for those forgotten children who want education. It is for those frightened children who want peace. It is for those voiceless children who want change."

Currently residing in Birmingham, Malala is an active proponent of education as a fundamental social and economic right. Through the Malala Fund and with her own voice, Malala Yousafzai remains a staunch advocate for the power of education and for girls to become agents of change in their communities.

http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2014/yousafzai-bio.html