

Afghan Woman Lost Three Husbands to Militancy. Her Fourth Husband is Going to War

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Bibi, watching her husband, Aminullah, set off for a three-month stint on the front line, has a simple plea: she hopes the men in power don't make her a widow for a fourth time.

Taj Bibi 33, holds a photo of her husband next to the military uniforms and pictures of her former husbands who were killed during the conflicts, at her home in Asad Abad Kunar province eastern Afghanistan.

Kabul/Jalalabad (Afghanistan): Heavily pregnant Taj Bibi prays for her fourth husband as the Afghan soldier sets off to battle the Taliban, hoping his fate won't be the same as that of his three brothers, her first three husbands, all killed fighting the militants.

Clashes between Afghan government forces and Taliban insurgents have not died down despite peace talks in Qatar that have raised hopes for an end to Afghanistan's seemingly endless cycle of war.

At least 60 members of the Afghan security forces were killed in the past week across the country.

Bibi, watching her husband, Aminullah, set off for a three-month stint on the front line, has a simple plea: she hopes the men in power don't make her a widow for a fourth time.

"I can't afford to see my five children being orphaned again," said Bibi, 33, who lives in the Sadeqabad area of mountainous Kunar province in eastern Afghanistan.

Bibi was 18 when she got married for the first time, to Aminullah's oldest brother, who was a soldier.

Life was good, Bibi says, until her husband was killed in a battle with the Taliban. Within months, she married her his younger brother, also a soldier.

It is common in ethnic Pashtun society for widows to marry their brothers-in-law because of a belief that a widow should not marry outside the family.

But even before she came to terms with her new life, a pregnant Bibi had to identify the bloody body of her second husband, who was killed defending a check-point from a Taliban attack.

'BLAME MYSELF'

After 90 days of mourning, she agreed to her father-in-law's request that she marry his third son, a police officer. He was killed in a clash with the Taliban in 2017.

That same year, Bibi married Aminullah, the fourth brother, who accepted his three-time widowed sister-in-law as his wife along with her children.

"Sometimes I blame the Taliban, sometimes I blame the Afghan government, sometimes I blame the foreign forces but mostly I blame myself for all this pain," Bibi told Reuters over the telephone.

Bibi is a devout Muslim and prays five times a day.

"Islam teaches us not to kill anyone, but here in our land we just kill anyone and everyone," she said.

"I don't know if Allah understands my pain and loss."

She says she begs Aminullah to quit the army but he promises he'll be back from his tours of duty. She also prays that peace will save him.

"My life depends on seeing my husband alive," she said.

Bibi spends much of her time sewing clothes for her children, and cares for them and an extended family of 15 people on Aminullah's monthly income of \$300, and pension allowances for her dead husbands.

She said people die once but after losing three husbands, she felt like she'd already died three times.

"Maybe I'm just unlucky."

- Reuters, News18