**Exclusive: The Secret Shelters That Protect Afghan Women**

**Bibi Tells ABC News' Diane Sawyer Why Husband Cut Off Her Nose and Ears**

**By MARGARET ARO and MARK MOONEY**

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Not every Afghan is hoping the Americans soon leave their country. Some are actually dreading it.

"You can't leave Afghanistan," Manizha, who helps run a shelter for [battered women](http://abcnews.go.com/International/Afghanistan/americans-hold-covert-meeting-afghan-women-school-daughters/story?id=9500513), recently warned "World News" anchor [Diane Sawyer](http://abcnews.go.com/WN/Afghanistan/afghan-president-karzai-grateful-us/story?id=9536817). Behind Manizha, women who were beaten, bruised and badly scarred shake their heads in urgent agreement.

The [secret women's shelter](http://www.womenforafghanwomen.org/) is run by Manizha -- who, like most Afghans, goes by only one name -- and by New Yorker Esther Hyneman. It is one of a string of shelters and counseling centers that opened in 2007 and have since helped about 1,500 Afghan women escape beatings and abuse that can shock even battle-hardened combat surgeons.

Among the most heartbreaking is the story of Bibi. She is 17, and she says her face was mutilated by her husband, a Talib. Bibi's nose and ears were cut off as punishment for running away to escape the constant pummeling by her husband and his family.

She was married to the radical Muslim when she was 12, Manizha told Sawyer. Her marriage was the result of an outlawed tribal custom called "baad" in which the daughter was given away as compensation for a crime or offense committed by a male member of Bibi's family.

Girls given away in baad transactions are often little more than slaves. Bibi was forced to sleep in a stable with the animals, and beatings and pain became part of life for her.

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Bibi tried to escape but was captured. Her husband was ordered by the Taliban to punish her by disfiguring her face. While her brother-in-law held her down, her husband sliced off her nose and ears.

Left for dead, she crawled to her uncle's house, but he refused to help. Bibi staggered on to her grandfather's house. He called her father. The local Afghan hospital was unable to treat her wounds, and suggested her father take her to the nearby U.S. military base, Forward Operating Base Ripley in Oruzgan province.

"She was very scared. She covered up," said Air Force Sgt. Lindsay Clark, a medic who was on duty when Bibi arrived three days after the attack.

Maj. Jeff Lewis, an Air Force surgeon, told ABC News he was used to seeing war wounds, but Bibi's injuries appalled him.

"It was barbaric and shocking to see this, that somebody had done this to this young girl... It was unlike anything I've ever seen," Lewis said. "I'm surprised that ... it still exists, this type of problem in the world." Despite their scars -- from fists, knives, burns, electrical cords -- there is an argument that the women at Manizha's shelter are the lucky ones.These women have found a way out of their brutal marriages. Millions of Afghan women are routinely handed over for marriages while they are still children and endure lives of constant battering.

"Ninety percent of Afghan women have experienced some form of human rights violation, 15 million Afghan women probably need our help," Manizha [told Sawyer](http://abcnews.go.com/WN/Afghanistan/afghanistan-general-stanley-mcchrystal-tells-diane-sawyer-surge/story?id=9525700).

It's not just Afghan women who want things to change.

"Husbands, fathers and brothers, they come for help," Hyneman told Sawyer. "They want a peaceful life... a family life and want to be able to support their children," rather than marry them off at a young age.

**Despite Her Scars, Bibi Likes to Sing**

"Men want their daughters educated. They beg us all the time. Build schools for our daughters, we want our daughters to go to school. They've learned the price of ignorance and illiteracy," Hyneman said.

That price is starkly visible on Bibi's face and in her behavior. She keeps a hand in front of her, and looks away when she speaks.

When first treated at the U.S. base, Bibi was so modest and shy that she didn't want to show her facial wounds to the male doctor.

"At one point she began screaming, not very pleased with the male presence," Lewis said. The doctor had to rely on Clark and other female aides to clean her wounds and assess the damage.

Bibi recuperated at the U.S. base for 2 1/2 months, slowly letting out details of her ordeal, slowly regaining trust and emerging from her shell. Doctors in the U.S. have offered their services to help reconstruct her face.

But Bibi can't yet fathom what her future holds. When Sawyer asked her what she dreams will happen, Bibi said, "I don't know what will happen in the future."

When Sawyer asks about the offer from American doctors to help her, Bibi tilts her hands up in a gesture of "who knows?" She touches her nose and covers up her face with a scarf.

Her new American friends say that Bibi's courage is inspiring.

"The thing about Bibi, even after everything that had happened to her, she was in such good spirits," said Clark, who said she became "very close" to Bibi.

The medic said Bibi sang a lot. "She would sing about what she saw outside and the people around her and I guess however she was feeling that day is what she would sing about."

But there are many other women like Bibi who have no hope of rescue and the hope of change seems out of reach without help from the outside world.

Education is the answer, Manizha says. "Lots of education and lots of patience with the international community," she says. "You can't leave Afghanistan." **Click here to head to** [**Women for Afghan Women's website**](http://www.womenforafghanwomen.org) **and learn more about how you can help**

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