

## Was there Something in Logar?

When I returned to Kabul in 1998, I was looking for my friend Ghulam Faruq. He had been my student at Kabul University from 1973 to 1976. He was from Saghumkhel village in Logar and had gone to a poor high school in the district capital, Baraki-e-Barak. Faruq was a mathematical natural and superior to almost all fellow students. However, because he was not a Pashtun, he was denied a university career. In the war against the communists, he was a commander. When the communists were defeated, the victors, the mujahideen, fell upon each other in a civil war – especially in the capital Kabul. In Logar, however, the various mujahideen parties kept a truce and entrusted Ghulam Faruq with the task of organizing schooling for the children of the province. He did this as best he could. There was no money. The parents had to pay the teachers. When the Taliban came to power, Faruq, who had meanwhile been on the Hajj in Mecca with his mother, withdrew into private life. When I showed up in Saghumkhel, he was immediately willing to organize a teaching program with me. So, in 1998 we started a mosque school program not only in Kabul but also in Hadji Ghulam Faruq's homeland.

Soon the project area in Logar was expanded to the west. Mohmand Pashtuns live there. Mirakhan was the person in charge there. When OFARIN's lessons in the mother tongues showed good results, we wrote our own textbooks for teaching arithmetic, peppered with crisp text problems. Mirakhan came to Kabul excited and told us how the students had thrown themselves into these difficult tasks. Girls who had already gone through our lessons asked their younger siblings to bring them the new textbooks. They also wanted to try to solve the difficult tasks. Mirakhan unfortunately passed away. His son Ehsanullah took over the Mohmand area and moulded himself into a veritable person in charge.

Gradually, the Taliban gained influence in Logar. Haji Faruq and Ehsanullah came to terms with them. The Taliban have nothing against our teaching in mosques. Probably some of our teachers are also Taliban. And probably these Taliban who live in the area would not mind us foreigners visiting them. But on the journey to the project area, we would have to travel through the dominions of other Taliban commanders. On the main road, there are often Chechens who have been sent to Afghanistan by Pakistani intelligence as Taliban. These desperados do not have children in Afghanistan who need to learn to read and write. It is better not to meet them as a foreigner. In the meantime, no foreigner has been in Logar for ten years. Faruq and Ehsanullah came regularly to Kabul and reported on the program. Soon there were more than 120 classes in Logar, including 12 classes for women and older girls taught by female teachers – of which the Taliban knew nothing. By comparison, OFARIN's program had about 450 classes at the beginning of 2016.

In the fall of 2015, the president of the Department of Education of our partner Ministry of Religious Affairs told me that a delegation of dignitaries from Logar Province had visited the ministry. The dignitaries had asked the officials to warn us. The teaching in Logar is a fraud. There are no classes there. The foreigners were naive and wasted their money on fraudsters. The president himself had not met the dignitaries. However, the matter had been discussed in the conference of senior officials of the Ministry. He had been instructed to have the provincial and district authorities of the Ministry investigate the accusations. He was to inform us of the allegations and ask us to look into the matter on our part.

That was a nasty blow. And it continued. No sooner had I returned from the ministry than a caller from Logar answered the phone. It was all a scam, he said, about our lessons. I asked the gentleman to come to our office on occasion to tell me face to face. The caller ignored this request and instead repeated his claims about our classes not taking place. He finally responded to my fourth request to

visit our office. He said he could not come to our office. "Yes, but why not?" I asked. "Because then the Taliban will kill me."



Right after the conversation ended, it called again. A teacher from our program called from Logar. Only five students attended his classes and he was paid only 1000 Afghani a month. At that time, our teachers were entitled to 3000 afghani per month. If so, I told the man, his class would have to be closed and perhaps the whole program in Logar. Yes, I should do that. After all, he said, there were often fights. Through the phone, I heard my interlocutor being urged by others to tell me more.

I was pretty floored. The program in Logar was about to end. Everything I had learned that afternoon was spinning through my head. But as I recapped the calls, I stumbled. Our people in charge of Logar come to our office at least twice a month without the Taliban touching a hair on their heads. It was a lie that the Taliban would kill the first caller if he came to our Kabul office. And a teacher not receiving full pay would complain about it and demand back pay. But he would never agree to stop his own teaching. No teacher does that.

The calls were arranged. Probably the callers were sitting in Kabul. And getting a couple of elderly gentlemen to tie a turban and introduce themselves to a ministry as dignitaries from Logar doesn't take much either.

The ministry's investigation was underway. The provincial authorities were informed and then the district authorities. They finally sent out officials who visited a great many of our classes. This took several months.

We sublet some of our office space to the CPHA organization. Hadji Abdul Latif and his son worked there for CPHA. They are from Logar. Hadji is considered to be a particularly honest person. When prayers are said in our office, he is the prayer leader. I asked the Haji if he could help us obtain information from independent third parties about our program in Logar. He promised to do his best. Four days later, he asked me to join him. He himself was from Logar, but not from the project area. However, he had acquaintances there. He called them. The first one had just returned from the Hajj,

so he was particularly pure. He said that he had heard about OFARIN's program before. Upon receiving the call, he went to see some of the classes. He was told that Hadji Ghulam Faruq and Ehsanullah, the son of Mirakhan, were in charge. The classes were good and very popular with the people, he said. Abdul Latif had called another man. He was a trained teacher. He had applied to OFARIN and would have liked to teach there. But the people in charge would not have had the funds for another class. Despite this disappointment, he would not let anything happen to the program. It is successful. The population is happy about this teaching, he said.

In February 2016, the ministry had the internal report. The authorities in the district and provincial administrations were very satisfied with OFARIN's program.

So, who were the "dignitaries from Logar"? There is every indication that an employee whom OFARIN had dismissed gathered them together in Kabul and sent them to the ministry. I am thinking of someone who hates Haji Faruq and Ehsanullah with all his heart.

In Afghanistan, any citizen can submit something criminal to a third party at any authority and thereby trigger an investigation.

Haji Ghulam Faruq was killed in an assassination attempt a year later. We will probably never know the reasons for this. But the murder apparently had nothing to do with our program.