

# Girl with a candle

It's July 2013, and it's been reported that more than 18 are dead, and dozens more injured in one of the scariest days of all Pakistanis lives. We gather here together, as people of the Hazara community to give respect to those who have been impacted and have lost their lives back home, coming together not just as people of the Hazara community, but as brothers and sisters of Pakistan. Sitting here thinking of how grateful we should be that we were able to leave the dangers of our homeland but also leave everything we know.

I don't understand why or what goes through these people's minds when targeting schools full of children, with hopes and dreams that now cannot be reached and cut short because of some stupid decisions made by people with no lives whatsoever. School is meant to be a safe place for the children in Pakistan, a haven that children from the ages of 2-18 are able to go to, being able to learn about the wonders of the world and forget about their countries problems like this, but now, I fear that our children, the next generation will be traumatized and think that this is normal, that bombing, guns, violence is normal in the outer world. I pray that my children don't go through this tragedy ever in their lives and understand the importance of acknowledging these traits in our country but also learn that what is happening isn't normal.

I came here to grieve the loss of our children but also educate and support the teachings and understandings for our children who have been fortunate to leave and live a better life. I pray that this doesn't happen again but knowing the struggles of war and gangs back home this is just the beginning for our children. Life as a Pakistani immigrant isn't easy at all. All the pressure to be the provider for my family back home as well as a present student that is active in my education and studies, creating a balance between the two and making time for myself as well isn't an easy thing, and mentally it's draining. I'm tired, physically, mentally, and spiritually of everything that some days I do feel like I should end it. But I always remember that there are people in my country, elders, children who are suffering to make ends meet so that's my drive to do better for myself and live for them, for those who didn't get a chance to escape and live a better life like I am now.

I am extremely grateful to be able to volunteer and help my country help those in need who are suffering physically, mentally and spiritually. I've been volunteering ever since I moved to Australia, so It's been 8 years of serving my country, helping the elderly understand how times have changed and that here in Australia they are safe to roam the streets during the day and at night without having to worry if they would be shot. In

the 8 years of volunteering one of the worst cases I have encountered was a family of 6 children all new immigrants to Australia and a single father who clearly had trauma from Pakistan. When I met them all the children feared everything, but as time passed, they learned to trust people and things here, for example one of the kids was afraid of public toilets because they thought we were going to be killed or attacked in there. Finally, as they learned the new ways, they understood that they are finally safe here in Australia, and I think this was one the main reason I stayed volunteering for the immigrant volunteer group organisation; because of that one family and the growth and hope they had to create a new beginning. Within that family all 6 of the kids got into universities around Australia, and their father became a supermarket owner which is going very well.

This protest is very important to me as it helped me understand the struggles my family had to go through everyday back at home, and the young children who still suffer from that surreal reality of their everyday lives.