

## **The Work of the Dead and Living: Hazaras of Quetta<sup>1</sup>**

In 2014, Human Rights Watch released a report titled *We are the Walking Dead*<sup>2</sup> detailing targeted killings, bombings, systematic marginalization faced by the Hazaras; an ethnic and religious minority residing in Quetta, Balochistan. In May 2018, the Chief Justice of Pakistan declared Hazara persecution an ‘ethnic cleansing’.<sup>3</sup> As a result of said marginalization, Hazaras have now been limited to two areas of the city--Marriabad and Hazara Town--with a literal wall separating Hazara Town from other nearby Pashtun dominated areas.<sup>4</sup> I am applying to AIPS for a grant to support six weeks of summer research, equally distributed between Lahore and Karachi. These six weeks are a part of a larger project that will include an additional six weeks in Quetta. Here, I describe the larger project, with a focus on the research that AIPS funds will support.

My focus in this project is on the ways in which subjects move between the categories of living and dead. How do the dead become social and political players? How do the living conduct their affairs, particularly politics, in the face of imminent death?<sup>5</sup> During my time in Karachi and Lahore, I intend to interview a number of Hazara political actors--activists, community organizers--in particular about the events of January and February 2013.<sup>6</sup> These two events, in which mourning Hazara community members refused to bury their dead as political protest in response to bomb blasts, becomes a way of exploring the broader themes of this project.

Having been raised in Pakistan and being a native speaker of Urdu, I am well situated to conduct this work. Additionally, by the time of this research, I will have preliminary training in Farsi. Hazaragi, the indigenous language of Hazaras, being a dialect of Farsi makes this training relevant. I also plan to engage in Hazaragi language training, formally or informally, during my time in Quetta. I have some connections with Hazara community members in both Karachi and Lahore. In Lahore, this is a result of my involvement in activist circles during my undergraduate at Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). In Karachi, my Shia identity facilitates family connections with the Hazara community. These networks ensure a safe and productive research experience. For the longer project, I intend to volunteer at one of many Hazara organizations operating in Quetta.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, I hope to undertake a short participant observation of six weeks, conduct interviews and collect audio-visual data.<sup>8</sup> I will then work on the entire project during academic year 2019-2020 in consultation with my supervisors as part of thesis work in my South Asian Studies Masters program at the University of Washington, Seattle. This fieldwork will also contribute towards a PhD proposal in Anthropology scheduled to be submitted in 2019-2020 academic cycle.

Compared to Hazaras in Afghanistan, and Hazaras in the diaspora, Hazaras in Quetta, and Pakistan more broadly, have received less scholarly attention.<sup>9</sup> Much of the work on Hazaras in Pakistan has come through journalism and reports by various human rights organizations.<sup>10</sup> I hope to enrich the literature by providing an ethnographic account. Through this study, I hope not only to add to the literature on Quetta, Hazaras in Pakistan, but also to an understanding of the ways in which the dead and imminent death color political and social practice in times of mass violence.

## Endnotes

1. Laqueur, Thomas Walter. *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.
2. "We are the Walking Dead" *Killings of Shia Hazaras in Balochistan, Pakistan*. Washington DC: Human Rights Watch, June 2014. Accessed December 27, 2018.
3. "CJP Calls Killing of Hazaras 'ethnic Cleansing'." *The Express Tribune*. May 11, 2018. Accessed January 31, 2019. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1707695/1-hazara-killings-tantamount-ethnic-cleansing-cjp/>.
4. Kermani, Secunder. "Quetta's Hazara: The Community Caged in Its Own City." *BBC News*. December 12, 2017. Accessed January 30, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42219669>
5. For a sample of relevant scholarship on politics of dead bodies, death work, deathscapes, see: Leshem, Noam. "'Over Our Dead Bodies': Placing Necropolitical Activism." *Political Geography* 45 (2015): 34-44. Verdery, Katherine. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. Maddrell, Avril, and James D. Sidaway. *Deathscapes: Spaces for Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance*. London: Routledge, 2016. Young, Craig, and Duncan Light. "Corpses, dead body politics and agency in human geography: following the corpse of Dr Petru Groza." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38, no. 1 (2013): 135-148. Makley, Charlene. "The sociopolitical lives of dead bodies: Tibetan self-immolation protest as mass media." *Cultural Anthropology* 30, no. 3 (2015): 448-476. Moon, Claire. "Politics, Deathwork, and the Rights of the Dead." *Humanity Journal*. November 09, 2018. Accessed February 04, 2019. <http://humanityjournal.org/blog/claire-moon/>.
6. For reports from the time, see: Dawn.com. "Hazara Shias Bury Victims Four Days after Deadly Quetta Bombings." *DAWN.COM*. January 14, 2013. Accessed February 02, 2019. <https://www.dawn.com/news/778738/sit-in-3>. Shah, Syed Ali. "Hazara Protesters Refuse to Bury Dead Bodies." *DAWN.COM*. February 17, 2013. Accessed February 02, 2019. <https://www.dawn.com/news/786747>.
7. In addition to being my base during fieldwork in Quetta, these organizations also provide a theoretical 'in'. Though Hazaras resort to a number of political strategies of survival, one has been a strong commitment to community development. Thus, rather than resorting to Agamben's notion of 'bare-life', in the face of extreme violence, they have formed mental health clinics, hospitals, schools, colleges, vocational training centers, art studios, football, cricket and other sports facilities.
8. By visual data, I refer to photographs of areas within Quetta where the dead make significant appearances: hazara graveyard, police station, military academy all of which feature pictures remembering the various dead. In addition, I intend to collect photographs of Hazara neighborhoods that demonstrate the spatial impact of long periods of violence perhaps best represented by the wall that separates Hazara neighborhoods from others. By audio data, in addition to recordings of interviews where possible, I refer to hubbub of Quetta more broadly, and Hazara neighborhoods more specifically. Part of the reason is to demonstrate the disjuncture between visual remembrance of the dead, and the lively sounds of places like the graveyard.
9. See: Gazdar, Haris, Kaker, Sobia Ahmad and Khan, Irfan "Buffer zone, colonial enclave or urban hub? Quetta: between four regions and two wars." *Crisis States Research Centre working papers series 2* (69). Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2010. Changezi, Sofie. "Societies in Conflict: the education of young female Hazara Afghan refugees in Quetta, Pakistan: factors influencing access to basic education." Master's thesis, 2009. Olszewska, Zuzanna. "Quetta's sectarian violence and the global Hazara awakening." Middle East Research and Information Project, 2013. Monsutti, Alessandro. "Image of the Self, Image of the Other: Social Organization and the Role of Ashura among Hazaras of Quetta." In *The Other Shiites: From the Mediterranean to Central Asia*, edited by Alessandro Monsutti, Silvia Naef, and Farian Sabahi, 173-94. Bern: Peter Lang, 2007.
10. See: Rumi, Raza. "Pakistan: Ungoverned Spaces." In *"Telling the Story" Sources of Tension in Afghanistan & Pakistan: A Regional Perspective (2011-2016)*, edited by Emma Hooper, 179-200. Barcelona: Barcelona Center for International Affairs, 2016. "Under Siege of Terror: The Shia Hazara of Pakistan." Amnesty International USA. April 19, 2012. Accessed January 31, 2019. "The Fifth Floor - Pakistan's Persecuted Hazaras - BBC Sounds." BBC. Accessed January 31, 2019. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3cswdpd>. "Pakistan's Hazara Community Under Attack." Human Rights Watch. April 30, 2018. Accessed January 31, 2019. <https://www.hrwn.org/news/2018/04/30/pakistans-hazara-community-under-attack>. "Pakistani Hazaras Face a Constant Threat of Targeted Violence. Many Say the Security Response Has Been Ghettoizing and Ineffective." Public Radio International. Accessed January 31, 2019. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-05-31/pakistani-hazaras-face-constant-threat-targeted-violence-many-say-security>.