

Interview with Jamie Doran, director of Massacre at Mazar

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Jamie Doran is an award-winning documentary filmmaker who has been producing films for the past 22 years. He spent seven years working for the BBC before establishing his own independent television company. He has spent much of the last eight months working in Afghanistan on film projects. The WSWS conducted this interview with Doran on June 14.

WSWS: You deal briefly with the events in the fort of Qala-i-Janghi, but the main part of your film concentrates on the fate of all 8,000 fighters who surrendered to American forces in Konduz.

JD: That's right. 8,000 surrendered to Amir Jahn, who negotiated the surrender deal. In the film he says he counted the prisoners one by one, and there were 8,000 of them. 470 went to Qala-i-Janghi. The assumption is that seven-and-a-half-thousand went from Qala-i-Janghi to Sheberghan, and the result of that transport was that, according to his words, "Just 3,015 are left. Where are the rest?"

WSWS: What happened to the surviving 3,015? Have they been set free?

JD: No, most of them are still there in prison. They are letting some of them go, but the majority are still in detention.

WSWS: Regarding the US involvement in what took place, could I ask about the witnesses who appear in the film?

JD: Three members of the Afghan military appear in the film, two ordinary soldiers and one general. Then there is one taxi diver who witnessed three containers with blood pouring from them. He said his hair stood on end and that it was horrific. Then two of the truck drivers testify who were forced to take the containers into the desert. Based on the statements of the witnesses, the total number of those transported was at the very least 1,500, but more likely the total is up to

3,000.

WSWS: Is there any other evidence, apart from the testimony of these witnesses, on the involvement of the American military in the deaths of these 3,000 prisoners?

JD: Absolutely not. The reason the story has been released early is that I received a warning from Mazar-i-Sharif that the graves in the desert were being tampered with. All the evidence is in the graves, and it is essential that those graves are not touched!

WSWS: Do you know who was tampering with them?

JD: Yes I do, but I am not saying. What I am saying is that everyone is innocent until proven guilty, and the genuinely innocent have nothing to fear from an independent inquiry. So the Afghans and Americans involved in this have nothing to fear from an independent inquiry, if they are innocent. I am sure they can have no objections to such an inquiry.

WSWS: In your opinion, in such an operation involving the transportation and elimination of up to 3,000 people, is it possible that the American troops did not have knowledge or give their consent?

JD: You want my opinion? My answer is no. One hundred and fifty American soldiers were present at Sheberghan prison. That does not include CIA personnel. In my opinion, it would be highly unlikely that they could remain unaware of something taking place of such magnitude.

WSWS: In your opinion, how high up in the US army chain of command does complicity in these events extend?

JD: I repeat. When you have 150 American soldiers and a number of CIA personnel in the vicinity of Sheberghan prison, it would be extremely strange if they did not have knowledge of these atrocities taking place.

WSWS: In the film, witnesses say that American military personnel were involved in the torture and shooting of Afghan prisoners.

JD: In the film, accusations are made that torture was carried out by American soldiers, but the major accusation in terms of the numbers involved is that an American officer told one of the witnesses to get the containers out of the town of Sheberghan before satellite pictures could be taken. Also, one of the drivers talked of 30 to 40 American soldiers being present at the location of the murder and burial of survivors in the desert.

WSWS: Is there any evidence to point to the participation of American soldiers in shooting victims in the desert?

JD: I have absolutely no evidence that American troops were involved in the shooting that took place in the desert. At the same time, there are other witnesses to the mass grave in the desert. There are human rights activists who found the mass grave in the desert even before me, and they now describe my film as “the missing link.” They found the grave and, under the auspices of the UN, dug up a small section of earth containing 15 bodies. They estimate that in that one section of the desert there were about a thousand bodies. They too are calling for the grave to be protected, because at the moment it is being protected by no one. So the evidence can be easily tampered with.

WSWS: Based on the evidence of your film, what are you calling for?

JD: I am a journalist. I do not make calls. What I am saying is that evidence must be protected. It is essential that the grave is protected until an international inquiry can be carried out.

WSWS: What has been the reaction to your film?

JD: It has been incredible. I have had worldwide inquiries. There has even been interest in America. It has been astonishing. I have had inquiries from South Africa, Australia, as well as every country in Europe.

WSWS: What are your plans for showing the film to a wider audience?

JD: As you know, this is a short film that I have released in order to prevent the graves being damaged. The main film will be finished in about five to six weeks, and will carry greater implications against the people involved.

WSWS: Could you say something about the risks

involved in shooting your film?

JD: I was working as an independent journalist in Afghanistan—that says everything. I do not give a damn about my own position, but I am concerned about my journalists there and, in particular, I am concerned about the witnesses who risked everything to appear in the film. They had no reason to give these interviews. It has put them in great danger. None of them received a single cent for their contributions. I repeat that they received absolutely no payment for their appearance in the film and have only, in fact, put themselves in extreme danger. It is urgent that immediate action is taken to protect the graves, protect the evidence. The innocent have nothing to fear.



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