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SURVIVAL OF THE WARZONE INTERPRETER

-Behind the untold story-

CANDIDATO

Jessica Zagolin

RELATORE

Antonietta Iacoviello

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, an increasing number of people have been travelling for many reasons: some of them move in order to start a new life elsewhere, others to search a better economic future, for business reasons or because they are fleeing from the recent wars or from religious or political persecutions. With considerable cultural differences, many people are now living together, creating new multicultural societies where communication may be difficult or even impossible, with a consequent risk of misunderstanding during the interaction. In order to avoid this situation, the primary need is to eliminate linguistic and socio-cultural barriers and this can only be achieved with the help of interpreters. This is the reason why interpreters and translators have increased in number and they have organized themselves at both national and international level. Alongside with the more traditional translators (who deal with written texts) and interpreters of conference and diplomatic settings (who deal with spoken words), new figures of interpreters have been created for tackling the changes of society. Interpreters who work with minority communities in their host countries have been grouped together under the heading "community interpreters" (<http://aiic.net/page/2977/interpreters-under-fire/lang/1>) and even if only in the recent past have they been object of study, the «community interpreting is the oldest "type" of interpreting in the world» (Roberts 1997:7). Although they have existed since ancient times, this profession is still not well defined and this is also shown by the numerous designations that the community-oriented interpreting has received: «community interpreting, public service interpreting, cultural interpreting, escort interpreting, dialogue interpreting, *ad hoc* interpreting, liaison interpreting, and medical or legal interpreting" (*ibid.*: 8). All these terms create a confused professional figure but in reality there are little differences between all of them (normally due to the setting in which the interpreting takes place -hospitals, schools, police stations, offices dealing immigrant matters, among others-). Generally, they all design the

type of interpreting done to assist those immigrants who are not native speakers of the language to gain full and equal access to statutory services (legal, health, education, local, government, social services) (Collard-Abbas, 1989:81, mentioned in *ibid.*).

Even though this definition is not recent, it still applies today. But, while for some people the label "community interpreter" is a way to differentiate this kind of interpreting from conference or diplomatic settings interpreting, for others it identifies someone who is «less than a qualified interpreter» (Garber,1998:11). In fact, the community interpreting is considered as «a second rate

form of interpreting, which is not worthy of specific attention in terms of status, training, remuneration and research.» (Gentile 1997:117). Unfortunately, there are still many countries that do not recognise the figure of the community interpreter, whose members represent the «first obvious group of vulnerable interpreters.» (<http://aiic.net/page/2977/interpreters-under-fire/lang/1>).

But today they have a key role in our society, not only in our communities. The military that move to a new country, journalists, doctors who work in war zones or in natural disasters areas, all need interpreters in order to achieve their missions: they are called “interpreters in war zones” or “interpreters in conflict zones” and they belong to the community interpreter's group as they perform the interpreting task but at the same time they work in a risky environment which differentiates them as an a-part group.

According to the filmmaker and writer Ben Anderson, who shot a documentary called *The Interpreters* in 2014 (<http://www.vice.com/video/afghan-interpreters-full-length-122>), Afghans and Iraqis civilians choose to be interpreters motivated by personal reasons. Anderson interviewed many of them and the results demonstrate that the majority of them have taken the job because they believed the Taliban would be defeated and their country would be rebuilt. Some of them have chosen this job because they were explicitly promised a visa after at least 12 months' service by the American Government. Only few of them are interpreters for the money, as they are not well paid.

Unfortunately interpreters in war zones are a category of employees that are not recognized professionally and consequently they do not receive the right protection from the authorities and the armies they serve, even if they put their life at risk working on the battlefield:

Civilian interpreters in war zones are not commanded by any institution, they are contracted to interpret, motivated by their ties to their nation, a social or political cause or by necessity. (Inghilleri 2010:185).

During these three years of study at the Department of Translation and Interpreting the interest about the interpreting world has been increasing every day. Exploring this complex world has unfortunately lead to discover that there are some interpreters who put their life on the line to carry out this job. They are the interpreters in conflict zones, people who risk their lives in order to help the Western countries (this thesis will focus on the United States Army in particular) but they do not receive the right protection backing exchange; they are abandoned in the hands of the enemy and will probably be killed because they are seen as traitors by their fellow citizens. Western countries try to hide this problem so the only solution in order to save the interpreters' lives is to raise awareness among people, in order to put pressure on governments, the only institutions that can save interpreters from certain death.

This thesis is structured as follows: In the first chapter the problem of the neutrality of the interpreters in conflict zones is presented, that is, one of the main skills that an interpreter has to observe, is pointed out, in order to establish if these people are really loyal to one part and against the other one during the interaction. The second chapter focuses on the United States' case, it studies how the U.S. is helping those interpreters that have been helping the troops, but unfortunately it the fact that the country is not doing enough to solve the problem will be shown. The last chapter is dedicated to the main organizations and international projects aimed at helping interpreters who are trapped in their countries, in order to allow them to reach the countries of the army they served.

Chapter one

1. ARE INTERPRETERS IN CONFLICT ZONES NEUTRAL?

1.1 Who are the interpreters in conflict zones?

As well as translating for American troops attempting to build relationships with Afghans, the interpreters played an essential role educating foreign forces about the local culture they so badly needed to understand. ([https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf))

In the last years many wars have been declared and many countries are fighting one against another. One of the never-ending conflicts is concentrated in the Middle-East, where American and European troops are fighting against the Taliban, extremists and other insurgent forces that terrorize the world. Interpreters have a crucial importance in these conflicts, as they provide possible communication and interaction between the two parties, whose cultures and languages are totally different. Interpreters are chosen among local civilians, and even though they are not professional interpreters, there are many reasons why the foreign forces prefer to recruit them rather than to bring their own interpreters. Despite the fact that they are more well-prepared in solving potential conflicts, the armies prefer to hire local interpreters not so much for safety conditions but because they are cheaper in economic terms. Interpreters «cost less per hour or per day, they don't need to be insured, their rights go no further than what they are used to», allowing the foreign party to «get out of the cost of providing healthcare, safe working conditions, disability benefits, pensions, looking after the family, etc.» (<http://aiic.net/page/2977/interpreters-under-fire/lang/1>). In fact foreign civilian interpreters are paid less than professional interpreters. This could be observed in the US Army, in fact the U.S. Government has been recruiting military linguists from different sources.

Firstly, the military trains its soldiers in various languages including Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Farsi, Korean, Pashto and Urdu at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California (Takeda 2009:56). The 51st TICO (Translator Interpreter Company) located in California is the first unit of the US Army whose mission is to prepare soldiers to provide «“native heritage” translation, interpretation and cultural advice. » (<http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2009/05/28/>).

Secondly, the military has been recruiting first-generation immigrants of foreign-born speakers of languages such as Arabic, Dari and Pashto, they teach them English and they become part of American forces. In this way the military can deploy them as interpreters and translators in Iraq and

Afghanistan (Schafer 2007, mentioned in Takeda 2009:57). These two categories represent the minority of interpreters used by the U.S. troops and, as they are U.S. citizens, they can earn over \$200,000 per year and they are housed on military bases where they are also provided with meals. (Harman 2009, mentioned in Inghilleri 2010:177).

Finally, the majority of the interpreters and translators used by the troops are locally procured and contracted by the U.S. Government (Takeda 2009:57). Their English can vary considerably. They are paid an average of \$15,000 per year and in most of the cases they cannot enter in the Green Zone¹(Harman 2009, mentioned in Inghilleri 2010:177). This shows clearly how local interpreters without US citizenship are not well paid in comparison to their US citizens colleagues and also they do not receive the same protection:

The fact that local interpreters are not legitimate members of the military means that they are not afforded the same institutional protections. Under these circumstances, the contingent nature of their position becomes once again exposed, for example in their lack of right to protection or asylum once they relinquish the interpreter role. (Inghilleri 2010:179)

Moreover, what governments, organizations, NGOs, the military, etc., totally ignore is the fact that locally recruited interpreters are not professionals and the lack of training and, consequently, of ethical behaviour of interpreters, especially their neutrality², could seriously compromise their life. There are many factors that distinguish locally recruited interpreters from professional interpreters. According to Parson's (mentioned in Wadensjö 2007:2):

A professional interpreter has three characteristics: emotional neutrality (all the professional's clients are treated equally), functional specificity (the professional's services are provided for the collective good and are restricted to the factual task), achieved competence (the individual gains professionalism through personal training and not through heritage).

1 Green Zone: «The International Zone (formerly known as the Green Zone) was the heavily guarded diplomatic/government area of closed-off streets in central Baghdad where US occupation authorities live and work. The area houses the civilian ruling authority run by the Americans and British and the offices of major US consulting companies.»
(<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/baghdad-green-zone.htm>).

2 According to Kermit, "many codes of ethical behaviour for interpreters share the same three basic principles: -discretion and confidentiality, -neutrality and reluctance towards carrying out other tasks apart from interpreting, -all that is said should be translated accurately. (Kermit 2007:242.)

(Parsosn, mentioned in Wadensjö *ibid.*).

However, working in such a context make the observation of the requirements difficult because the interpreter has to deal with two forces in conflict that are not interested in concluding an action in a reasonable way. Furthermore, working with «the occupiers of a country or a region are often seen as "sleeping with the enemy"» (<http://aiic.net/page/2977/interpreters-under-fire/lang/1>) and even unintentionally, by choosing this job, interpreters inevitably take a stand.

1.1.1 The problem of neutrality

"I'm proud that I work with the NATO and the United States forces, they came from far away to help Afghanistan." Shrosh, Afghan interpreter for the US army (extracted from <http://www.vice.com/video/afghan-interpreters-full-length-122>, minutes 4:28 to 4:38)

As said in the previous paragraph, being an interpreter or a translator requires many professional skills, one of which is the impartiality towards the two parties, which is essential when translating; impartiality is easily observed by interpreters who work in a neutral environment, when two parties are interested in concluding a discussion in a reasonable manner and they have the same purpose. On the contrary:

War interpreters do not work in a neutral territory, their relationship to war is up close and personal and at all stages of a conflict ethical decisions are required. Working in conflict situations requires interpreters and translators, professional and non-professional alike, to confront their personal, political and professional beliefs (Inghilleri & Harding 2010:166).

Remaining impartial is the most difficult barrier that an interpreter who works in conflict zones has to face. Some decisions taken by the UN «[do] not help interpreters' work to be perceived as "independent" and "impartial".» (<http://aiic.net/page/3196/the-aiic-resolution-on-interpreters-in-war-and-conflict-zones/lang/1>). For example the fact of calling interpreters «language assistants» or to «recommend that interpreters be made part of the team and even that they be provided with military uniforms» bestow on them «intelligence responsibilities and functions that totally compromise their independence». (*Ibid.*).

But often interpreters are conscious about the fact that they stand for the foreign army, as they decide to put their life at risk in order to be trusted guides for the soldiers. Some civilians do this job for a personal reason: they see it as an opportunity to contribute to rebuild their countries and to free them from violence. Foreign armies occupy their countries in order to fight against terrorist groups and to free the civilians from injustices they suffer every day. In order to do that they look for interpreters and they contract them.

In the article *You don't make a war without knowing why* (2010), Moira Inghilleri gathered witnesses from Iraqi interpreters who decided to serve the U.S. Army. «In the beginning of the conflict in Iraq, many interpreters wanted to help the forces to remove Saddam from power, others wanted to defeat the insurgents because they were destroying their livelihoods and diminishing their wealth.» (Inghilleri 2010:177):

I thought Saddam was a criminal. America was going to give us freedom, and I wanted to help with this. (Iraqi interpreter, LaPlante 2009, mentioned in Inghilleri 2010:178).

My family, we used to be a wealthy family [...] and then the insurgents came to our houses and they threatened us and they told us to leave our houses. [...]. (Iraqi interpreter, 'New voices', July 2009, mentioned in Inghilleri 2010:178).

Even if the examples above show that civilians take a side when they become interpreters, it does not mean that they manipulate translations to stand for one party; on the contrary they want to reach a peaceful situation and democracy, and therefore translating faithfully is the first step towards achieving this. Despite their impartiality when translating, «there is an equally powerful tendency by the different parties in a conflict, including the public, to position interpreters and translators as loyal to one side and opposed to another.» (Inghilleri & Harding 2010:167) as

In war, interpreters have a dual role, interpreters like combatants, thus function simultaneously as free agents and embodied conduits for the political and military institution they agree to serve. As such, they become *de facto* players in a conflict which they may not choose but which they sustain both morally and instrumentally. (Inghilleri 2010:185).

1.2 Relationship between the military and interpreters

“*We are simply quite blind without them*” US Marine in Afghanistan ([https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The Interpreter Ebook v6.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf)).

Soldiers need to trust their interpreters because they are their guide in a foreign territory in which they are subjected to different attacks and they are exposed to the enemy. At the beginning it could be difficult for soldiers to rely on local interpreters because they move in hostile grounds in which they are part of the foreign community, but generally interpreters are «university educated native of the country and have extensive cultural knowledge of the tribal areas the military unit are working with. In short, the level of competence of the interpreter clearly inspires trust on the part of the military interlocutors» (Tipton 2011:21); many of them are ex-students or professionals, such as teachers, doctors, non-official tour guides, ex-military and employees of the Ministry of Information. (Baker 2010:216). But as it will be shown later, they are not always seen as trustworthy people.

The locally-recruited interpreter is a key figure for the military because they are also a cultural informant, capable of giving advice on how to behave in certain occasions, being «able to navigate potentially inflammatory situations» (Tipton 2011:21), especially when religion is involved, thus avoiding many deaths among soldiers and local civilians. An example of this is an interpreter who alerted a U.S. unit about a religious festival in the south of Iraq. Due to the sensitivity of the occasion the interpreter «recommended to the military not to go out for any mission to avoid a clash or any sort of contact with those people because the latter think of these military forces as provocative to them. » (Tipton 2011:24). The precious advice the interpreter gave to the soldiers avoided a potential dangerous strife between the army and the Iraqis. In other circumstances the information the interpreter provides is even more important, saving even human lives. In *The Afghan Interpreters ebook* the filmmaker Anderson reported the testimony of Srosh, an interpreter who saved the life of a Marine; the interpreter said:

There was another US Marine officer who was on patrol and an Afghan National Army (ANA) officer was looking at him in a very bad way. I heard that he was going to try to shoot the American because he really didn't like him. [...] Immediately I went to the Marines and I told them the ANA officer was going to try and kill Lieutenant Robertson ([https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The Interpreter Ebook v6.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf)).

Another courageous act was made in March 2010 by Abdullah, an Afghan interpreter, who neutralized an IED (improvised explosive device) and saved many American lives, avoiding other worthless deaths.

(https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf).

One more factor that needs to be taken into account is the fact that the interpreter will often accompany military personnel around the different 'spaces' of conflict and therefore is not providing linguistic mediation all of the time, which creates new spaces for interaction and learning at the edges of the task of linguistic mediation (Tipton 2011:34). Since they stay with the soldiers all the time, interpreters are completely involved in wars, as the words of the Lieutenant Colonel R. Alan King demonstrate: «“Damn it Salih” I yelled back, “shoot, just shoot” and both Salih and I continued to fire”»; this episode occurred when he was in Iraq and these were the instructions he gave to the interpreter that was accompanying his patrol. «The action 'other-than-interpreting' can form an integral part of the interpreter's activity. Typically positioned as a non-combatant, the interpreter may have no choice but to engage in some form of combat in order to survive.» (*ibid.*:19).

The fact that the job of an interpreter of conflict zones is not limited to translations is also shown by the term 'fixer' that designates «someone who performs tasks beyond the purely linguistic transfer of information, such as arranging meetings or acting as drivers» (Palmer 2007, mentioned in Tipton 2011:20). This term is mostly used in the journalistic field, as interpreters 'fix' things for journalists (Baker 2010:209), following them during their reports. This close relationship between the interpreter and the foreign journalist is the main reason why they are the first target for the insurgent groups. The most famous case is about Ajmal Naqshbandi, narrated in the documentary of Ian Olds *Fixer: The Taking of Ajmal Naqshbandi* (<http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/fixer-the-taking-of-ajmal-naqshbandi/interview/ian-olds-and-christian-parenti.html#/documentaries/fixer-the-taking-of-ajmal-naqshbandi/index.html>). In 2007 the 24 year-old fixer was hired by the Italian journalist Daniele Mastrogiacomo to interview a notorious legged Taliban-commander called Mullah Dadullahand. As they entered in the Taliban territory, Mastrogiacomo, Naqshbandi and the driver, Sayed Agha, were captured: both the fixer and the driver were beheaded while the Italian journalist was released. In this same video, cruel images alternate jovial images about Ajmal's life one year before, together with the journalist of *The Nation* Cristian Parenti who was navigating the story of Matto and his death: an Afghan commander, killed by a NATO soldier in Balkh. Parenti was in the car with Ajmal, an Afghan TV journalist and the driver. People were joking and Parenti said to the camera “this is the best fixer in Afghanistan, right here, Ajmal, and this is the best TV journalist in Afghanistan, right here, and this is the best taxi driver” (extracted from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGvfg0mygmw> minutes 5:16 to minutes 5:28). This episode shows how foreign journalists or armies need to trust their interpreters, with whom they establish a strong friendship and could not have access to territories and provide information without them. Inevitably, as interpreters and the army spend much time together, they develop an affective bond as «safety and survival depend on mutual trust» (Inghilleri 2010:179). Ben Anderson interviewed interpreters that said “the Americans I worked with, they came to my wedding. They circled it so I had full security” and “One day I came home on leave with another interpreter and the Taliban surrounded us. There were American Special Forces in the area and they saved our lives.” ([https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The Interpreter Ebook v6.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf)). Despite the fact that interpreters are not providing information about the Taliban to the ISAF forces³, this strong relationship and mutual trust is a synonym of treason by the Taliban, being «positioned as one of us [foreigners] or potentially one of them [insurgent forces] with concrete and often life-threatening consequences.» (Baker 2010:198).

1.3 Interpreters in their local communities: friends or enemies?

“Our policy is that, whoever protects and supports foreigners as translators, they are national traitors for us and the people of Afghanistan and like the foreign soldiers and foreign occupiers they will be put to death” Taliban’s official spokesman, Zaibullah Mujahid (extracted from <http://www.vice.com/video/afghan-interpreters-full-length-122>, minutes 11:43 to minutes 12:10)

Interpreters work in the front line as true soldiers and they risk their life every day. But this is not the only danger they face: for the Taliban and other insurgent groups they are traitors because they serve the enemy army and consequently they are hunted and then killed. Moreover, they face hostilities from their fellow citizens, friends and even from their families in some cases.

When I spoke to my mom, I told [her] I joined the army, she doesn't like it she told me how come you're going to be against your people, against the Muslim, I told her, listen

³ The International Security Assistance Forces was a NATO mission providing 13 years of effective security across Afghanistan to ensure the country not to be again place of terrorists. The mission finished on December 31st, 2014 but on January 1st, 2015 began the NATO-Ied Resolute Support mission, the evolution of ISAF mission.

mom, I got to help those people I'm not going to be against them, you know as a translator-interpreter. I'm not a killer. (Moroccan-American interpreter, 'All Things Considered' 2008, mentioned in Inghilleri 2010:178).

As Ben Anderson shows in his documentary, interpreters and translators need to hide themselves if they do not want to be killed, they wear masks and use nicknames to disguise their identities; unfortunately it does not seem to be enough; in fact they are almost always discovered, especially if they are from small villages where everyone knows each other. For many people the fact that a person works with the Americans means that he is a spy and an infidel and for this reason he is considered no longer Muslim and neither human, so he should be killed. An interpreter said that even his cousin that is not Taliban has not come over to his house since he started working with the Americans 7 years before, saying “Your life is *haram* [forbidden] because you work for Americans.”(https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf).

There is a moment during the interpreters' career when going outside their homes becomes impossible, they have to stay hidden in their houses being unable to apply for other jobs. Many civilians have ties with the Taliban so they never know in which they trust or not. Torturing interpreters' associated and force them to reveal where they are hidden is also a regular occurrence, so trying to be as invisible as possible is also a way to save their relatives lives. (*ibid.*).

Interpreters face every kind of threat: insurgents shoot them and put magnet bombs under their cars. Other times the interpreters' families are the target of the Taliban, they kidnap their relatives and they ask for big amounts of money to release them but often interpreters do not dispose of money and for this reason they are killed. Robberies are also a daily reality for interpreters and their families. As they work for foreign forces they are supposed to gain a lot of money. Thieves burst in their houses and steal everything they can, beating and threatening people who live there. In many cases thieves are not the Taliban and it is the same Afghan police that is supposed to help the citizens who carry out these offences. (Extracted from <http://www.vice.com/video/afghan-interpreters-full-length-122>, minutes 7:24 to minutes 9:48).

Since 2007 in Afghanistan, 77 translators have been killed, 335 have been wounded and 10 are missing (<http://www.hickspartners.com/2011/10/>) and according to a declaration of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe there are «no register records on interpreters' deaths, but it is believed that, between 2003 and 2008, 360 were killed in Iraq.» (<http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewHTML.asp?FileID=12805&Language=EN>).

Chapter two

2. THE UNITED STATES SITUATION: PROTECTION OR INDIFFERENCE?

2.1 Special Immigrant Visa

In the light of the above, in order to protect those loyal Afghan and Iraqi citizens that put their lives at risk for the U.S. forces, the U.S. Government decided to offer them visas in order to flee from their violent and bloody countries.

There are three different programs under the name of Special Immigrant Visa that enable Iraqis and Afghans to apply for a visa.

The first one is permanent and it concerns exclusively Iraqis and Afghans interpreters or translators who must have worked directly with the U.S. Armed Forces as translators or interpreters for a period of at least 12 months. The U.S. Government allocates up to 50 visas per year to Iraqis and Afghans who are in possession of a written recommendation from a commander of the U.S. Armed Forces unit that was supported by the applicant.

The other two programs are temporary and they support the first program.

The first one refers to Afghans who were employed by the U.S. Government. For the fiscal year 2015 (from October 1st to September 30th) the National Defence Authorization Act has authorized the issuance of 4,000 SIVs; the program will end when all 4,000 visas have been issued, or on March 31st, 2017, whichever occurs first. The applicants may apply also for their spouses and children, which are not included in this numerical limit. The deadline to apply for the SIV is December 31st, 2015. To apply for this program the applicant must have been employed in Afghanistan by, or on behalf of, the U.S. Government for a period of one year or more, between October 7th, 2001 and September 30th, 2015; or by the ISAF as an interpreter or translator for U.S. military personnel for a period of one year or more, between October 7th, 2001 and December 31st, 2014.

The second program is for Iraqis who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. Government. This program should have provided 5,000 annual visas, from 2008 to 2013. In 2014 the program was extended, issuing 2,500 more visas and it will finish when all the visas have been issued. The deadline to apply for this program was September 30th, 2014. The working period went from March 20th, 2003 to September 30th, 2013, for a period of one year or more.

For both programs the applicant must have a provided faithful and valuable service to the U.S. Government or to ISAF and must have experienced or be experiencing an ongoing serious threat as a consequence of their job.

(The information were extracted from <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/immigrate.html>).

2.2 The difficulties of the SIV process

“I no longer want to help the Americans. They promised many things to the Afghan people. They are liars. I request for other Afghan people, please don't help the Americans, don't work with them.” An Afghan interpreter (extracted from <http://www.vice.com/video/afghan-interpreters-full-length-122>, from minutes 19:52 to 20:05).

“Seeing the interpreters clutching their little folders as if their lives depend on them – which they do – is one of the most heartbreaking things I've seen in Afghanistan”. Ben Anderson (https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf).

Despite the huge number of visas offered by the U.S. Government (approximately 9,000 visas for Afghans and 25,000 for Iraqis), only few interpreters have obtained it, as of March 31st, 2014 only 2,799 interpreters have been given a visa (https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf). This is due to the fact that the process to obtain the visa is very complicated, as the comedian John Oliver shows in the episode of *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver: Translators* (<http://qz.com/283833/watch-john-oliver-skewer-the-us-government-for-failing-its-war-zone-interpreters/>). In particular the applicant has to move through a 14 step process that requires many documents that are often impossible to obtain and many papers that have to be full-field with information that is difficult to get. As it can be observed by the sample of the DS-260 form of October 2013, a single file could be up to forty pages long as most of the documents they have to fill are the reiteration of previous ones already completed; moreover, senseless questions are asked, for example: «Are you coming to the US to practice polygamy?» or «Are you coming to the US to engage in prostitution or unlawful commercialized vice [...]?» or «Do you seek to engage in terrorists activities while in the US [...]?» (<http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/DS-260%20Exemplar.pdf>). Every step consists in massive blocks of papers that once finished have to wait for approval, a process which takes several months. This fact does not worry the U.S. Government, in fact the deputy Jarrett Blanc, the special representative for the Afghanistan and Pakistan of the State Department, said "they take the first step but they need to finish they own paper work before we can take the next step with them". (extracted from

<http://qz.com/283833/watch-john-oliver-skewer-the-us-government-for-failing-its-war-zone-interpreters/>, minutes 4:44 to minutes 5:05). Once the paperwork is finished, the applicant has to sustain a visa interview in the US embassy and has to provide letters of recommendation and medical examinations; all of them are difficult to obtain and those people inevitably expose themselves to the risk of being killed or injured. Interpreters have to pay all the documents by themselves, making a big effort in order to collect the money, sometimes in vain. In fact medical examinations, that cost about \$1,500, are only valid for six months, so they have to be bought several times.

([https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The Interpreter Ebook v6.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf)). This is the reason why thousands of interpreters find themselves with the visa application pending, waiting up to five years when anything can happen. An example is Muhammad, that is one of the few interpreters who succeeded in arriving to the United States in December 2013, after 3 years of waiting for the visa. When he was working with the US military he was shot twice and he survived, and later he began to be threaten by the Taliban. He started his application in September 2010 and during these 3 years and 4 months Muhammad was attacked many times, facing every kind of threat. Two years after he started applying for the SIV, the Taliban killed his father and tried to kill his brothers; then they kidnapped his 3 year-old brother and he had to pay \$ 35,000 to have him back. (*Ibid.*). This is only one example of the many interpreters who have been injured after they have started the SIV process, and unfortunately many of them were killed before they could leave their countries.

Concluding, the SIV program has failed, in particular for Afghans interpreters: only 32 visas were issued in three years from 2010 to 2013 (in 2011 only 3 visas were issued), whereas according to the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 the number of visas that should had been issued was 1,500 per year from 2009 to 2013. Even if things have improved recently thanks, in part, to the pressure of groups like "The List Project to resettle Iraqi Allies" and "Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project", the process is not fast enough. (<http://qz.com/283833/watch-john-oliver-skewer-the-us-government-for-failing-its-war-zone-interpreters/>)

2.2.1 Serious and ongoing threat

Interpreters face many difficulties when they apply for the SIVs and sometimes, after a large effort, they complete the whole process but in the end the visa is denied. According to the U.S. Government one of the most recurring causes is the fact that interpreters have failed to establish that there was a "serious threat" to their lives.

“The Taliban posted a letter on our house saying next time I come inside my house, they will kill my whole family. That's still not good enough?” Anonymous Afghan interpreter, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-afghanistan-interpreters-who-helped-us-in-war-denied-visas-us-says-they-face-no-threat/2013/11/10/af7acfc8-4180-11e3-b028-de922d7a3f47_story.html)

As shown in many reports, this assertion is totally unfounded because the U.S. Government has received several letters of recommendation by the US. Army officials and military personnel but the State Department still denies the SIVs. Matt Zeller, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan interviewed by Ben Anderson, said that interpreters are the first target of the Taliban, especially those who helped Americans to imprison them for an issue of revenge. After risking their lives in the battlefields accompanying the U.S. troops for many years, interpreters continue to live in fear because of threats from the Taliban.

“What's a serious ongoing threat for them? Do they need someone to bring in my decapitated head?” Name withheld Afghan interpreter, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-afghanistan-interpreters-who-helped-us-in-war-denied-visas-us-says-they-face-no-threat/2013/11/10/af7acfc8-4180-11e3-b028-de922d7a3f47_story.html).

2.2.2 Faithful and valuable service

Another requirement that interpreters have to provide, in order to obtain the visa, is to demonstrate that they worked at least twelve months providing «faithful and valuable service to the U.S. Government [...]» (<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/immigrate.html>) and it is another obstacle that applicants have to defeat.

Despite [name withheld, an Afghan interpreter] having saved the lives of six US soldiers and having the support of multiple US soldiers, the embassy found that the most skilled linguist who evidenced “valour and courage” did not provide “faithful and valuable” service and revoked his embassy approval.” (https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebok_v6.pdf).

The US Embassy uses vague standards and imprecise systems to evaluate this prerequisite:

applicants are subjected to security clearance procedures, the IC counterintelligence test and the polygraph test. But these tests that the embassy uses to define the loyalty of interpreters towards the troops are not reliable, to such an extent that they are not even used by Courts. (https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf).

In fact the American Psychological Association, on August 5th, 2004, stated that the accuracy of these lie detector tests has been controversial, so far that the courts, including the United States Supreme Court, have repeatedly rejected their use because of their inherent unreliability (<http://www.apa.org/research/action/polygraph.aspx>). This is the reason why the IC and polygraph tests should not decide the destiny of a person. Unfortunately this is not the only problem that applicants have to face, in fact not only the reliability of those machines should be questioned, but also the correctness to which these procedures are carried out should be examined. An applicant who submitted the test declared that when he submitted the CI test last time «“there were forty people and all forty failed the test. Everybody.”» (https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf).

Often interpreters successfully pass all the tests but they fail the last time, even if the answers they gave were the same as always. The way those tests are manipulated is also shown by cases of interpreters who only failed the tests that were submitted by local nationals from a rival tribe. The U.S. Embassy does not give any explanation about the failure, the interpreters are just notified in the end to see their dream collapsed (https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf).

2.3 The reality

Even though the State Department is accused of revoking interpreters' visas without reasons, in reality there is a motivation that prompts the Government to act in this way. An article written in *The Washington Post* on November 10th, 2013, says that sometimes explanations about denied visas are given but they are based on vague accusations that interpreters are affiliated with terrorists groups. However, the truth is that the United States refuses to issue visas because if talented English-speaking interpreters leave Afghanistan, it would be difficult to replace them, due to the fact that Afghanistan is a country in which the society is only at 28 percent literacy. In February 2010 the US Ambassador Karl Eikenberry sent a cable to the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton saying that «“This act [Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 to provide SIVs] could drain this country of our best civilian and military partners: our Afghan employees. The [SIV] program could have a significant deleterious impact on staffing and morale, as well as undermining our overall mission in Afghanistan”». (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-afghanistan-interpreters-who->

[helped-us-in-war-denied-visas-us-says-they-face-no-threat/2013/11/10/af7acfc8-4180-11e3-b028-de922d7a3f47_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2013/11/10/af7acfc8-4180-11e3-b028-de922d7a3f47_story.html)).

This declaration breaks completely the promises made to the interpreters when they sign contracts in order to work with the United States and they are granted visas:

“I was told that if I worked for three years, I would be able to go to the United States. That was a promise. The supervisor, all the US soldiers, they told me, “It is a good pay and you can get a visa to go to America and live a better life”. It was a guarantee. [...]. Every single American we worked with, they told us this. “Your life will be saved one day.”. Afghan interpreter

([https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The Interpreter Ebo
ok_v6.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebok_v6.pdf)).

On the other hand, an “issue of trust” affects the U.S. Government's decisions whether issuing a visa:

Since the invasion of their country in 2003, Iraqis have been consistently narrated as an undifferentiated source of threat, to the extent that, by 2006, the US military had replaced most Iraqi interpreters working in the Green Zone with Jordanians, and even invested in training citizens of the Republic of Georgia to take over in order to avoid relying on Iraqi interpreters – members of the them, enemy group (Packer 2007, mentioned in Baker, 2010:198).

Being tagged as “a source of threat” prevent Iraqis and, at some extent, Afghans, from being considered part of the Army even if they are absolutely loyal to whom they serve. This involves serious consequences both for Iraqis and Afghans because they are not provided with the right protection, and for soldiers who entrust themselves to poor cultural informants. Jordanians are an example of this, and it is clearly visible how they are considered more trustworthy and, therefore, treated differently:

Jordanians could be housed in the Green Zone without fear (Iraqis could secure temporary housing for only a limited time); Jordanians were issued badges that allowed them into the Embassy without being searched; they weren't subject to threat and blackmail, because they lived inside the Green Zone. In every way, Jordanians were

easier to deal with. But they also knew nothing about Iraq.
(<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/03/26/betrayed-2>).

As it could be expected, recruiting interpreters with other nationalities is not a good solution: foreigners are not able to give advice to soldiers about the culture, habits and traditions, and other important topics as a native. In fact native interpreters function not only as interpreters but also as cultural mediators in order to provide information about the most diverse doubt that soldiers need to know in such a fragile environment. This is the main reason why soldiers prefer native interpreters, even though there could be many prejudices towards them:

Translators and interpreters, specifically those who are locally recruited and/or ethnically belong to the 'enemy' group, are generally not seen by politicians and the military establishment as trustworthy and reliable interlocutors (Baker 2010:210).

Considering interpreters “one of them” involves serious consequences for them. If on the one hand there are soldiers who fully trust their guides, on the other hand there are members of the military who see interpreters as «second-class citizens» (Baker 2010:205) and they are treated as «dispensable cannon fodder» (Packer 2007:5, mentioned in *ibid.*). No importance is given to their lives, mattering little if they are killed while or by their fellow citizens when they are accused of treason towards their country. The lack of interest from the Army towards interpreters is also shown by the fact that interpreters are provided with inferior or no body armour (Packer 2007:5, mentioned in Baker 2010:205) and that the U.S. military has barred Iraqi interpreters working with American troops in Baghdad from wearing ski masks to disguise themselves, prompting some to resign and others to bare their faces even though they fear it could get them killed.

(http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2008/11/16/AR2008111602040_2.html?sid=ST2009021300180). The Lieutenant Colonel Steve Stover, a spokesman for the U.S. military justified this decision saying that “We are a professional Army and professional units don't conceal their identity by wearing masks” and interpreters who do not want to adapt with the new policy “can seek alternative employment.” (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2008/11/16/AR2008111602040_2.html?sid=ST2009021300180). The fact that interpreters wear a mask is not a problem for many soldiers who they work with, but as this new policy was promulgated, interpreters have no other choice than using other strategies to hide their faces or bodies, for example wearing ski goggles and having grown beards, in order not to be recognized. Even if the security in Iraq, especially in Baghdad, has improved in the last years, the number of assaults towards interpreters by the local insurgents has not decreased. (*ibid.*).

The total indifference and mistrust that some members of the military personnel have towards interpreters do not encourage the US embassy to issue visas. But this feeling of misgiving is not a valid reason that justifies the decision of leaving people, whose loyalty helped the foreign forces, in the hand of their killers.

Unfortunately the State Department is not working on any action at the moment and it is not available to be questioned about the problem. (extracted from <http://www.vice.com/video/afghan-interpreters-full-length-122>, minutes 34:06).

“When will my problem be solved?” Qaddeer, an interpreter still in Afghanistan with his visa application pending (extracted from <http://www.vice.com/video/afghan-interpreters-full-length-122>, minutes 33:11).

2.3.1 An alternative solution

Many interpreters, doomed to wait never-ending years without hope to receive a visa, do not resigned themselves to the situation and find other solutions in order to change their cruel destiny:

Without proper protection from the U.S. Government, many Iraqi [and Afghan] interpreters fled their country to escape the daily killing and intimidation (Takeda 2009:59).

Undertaking a journey of hope is an option that many of them choose. Interpreters put their life in the hands of smugglers that ask thousands of dollars in order to bring them to Europe. The entire journey can cost up to \$18,000, but interpreters are often asked to pay more during the journey for extra-commission, and to afford the journey they have no other solutions than to sell all their belongs and borrow money from their family or closest friends. (https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf). The journey lasts months or years and they have to walk over long distances, by plane, crammed in boats and hidden in trucks, facing a high risk for their lives. The most popular destinations are Italy, France or Germany, but the luckiest who do not get killed while trying to cross the borders, stop in Greece or Turkey, because they can not afford the whole journey. Hundreds and hundreds of people sleep wherever they find a place (it could be in parks, overcrowded apartments or disused factories), they have no money to buy food and many of them turn sick. If they are captured by the police, they are deported or locked up in jail for 18 months or they are sent to camps that are places described as worse than prisons («“In prison there is a place for sleeping, for eating, for meeting people. In

prison they have to give you everything. In the camps, they don't give you good food. You don't have any possibilities, nothing.”» (refugee interpreter in Greece, *ibid.*). This is the reason why many of them decide to return to their countries, after having undertaken this journey that worsens their lives.

The number of interpreters who give-up on the SIV process, to be smuggled, is unknown but estimates say the number of Afghan immigrants is approximately 30,000. ([https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The Interpreter Ebook v6.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf) and <http://www.vice.com/video/afghan-interpreters-full-length-122>).

Chapter three

3. PROJECTS TO SAVE INTERPRETERS' LIVES

«Governments and the armed forces have not done enough to ensure the safety of those they hire [interpreters]» (<http://aiic.net/page/6573/interpreters-working-in-war-zones-face-grave-risks-it-s-time-to-act/lang/1>) and for this reason, during the last years, the media has started focusing its attention on the figure of the interpreter in conflict zones, raising the awareness of the public in order to eliminate injustices. Some projects aimed at defining professionally the figure of the interpreter in conflict zone have been launched and new Facebook pages, local associations, organizations and veterans of war have done a lot to sustain those people who have helped Americans and Europeans who invaded their countries in order to "bring the peace".

3.1 AIIC

The AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence - International Association of Conference Interpreters) is the only global association of conference interpreters extended worldwide that launched a project to help reduce the problems of protection, information and training of interpreters in conflict zones in 2009. In the Facebook page, the project coordinator Linda Fitchett writes:

Our aim is to draw the attention of the public, governments and of state and non-state bodies to the fate of the interpreters who work in areas of conflict, calling for better protection for them and their families both during and post conflict. (<https://www.facebook.com/interpretersinconflictzones?fref=ts>).

Europe, as well as the United States, has not done enough to protect those people who have fought side by side with the foreign troops.

In 2003 the German parliament rejected a motion whose aim was protecting Afghan interpreters and translators who worked for the German army. Stressing the importance to offer asylum to interpreters and translator who are now in danger of death because they served the Bundeswehr, the AIIC, together with the International Federation of Translators (FIT), the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI), the Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer (BDÜ- German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators), and Red T sent an open letter to Chancellor Angela Merkel in order to raise awareness about this urgent need. <http://aiic.net/page/6562/open-letter-to-chancellor-angela-merkel/lang/1>

In the United Kingdom a long political debate caused disagreement, due to the fact that there are not

special programs for Afghans and Iraqis interpreters yet. In 2013 the prime minister David Cameron said «Afghans should be allowed to apply to settle in the UK "in extremis"» but «we should do everything we can to encourage talented Afghans to stay in their country [...]» in order to «go on working in Afghanistan and really go on building their country [...] because in the end it is in our interests they build up Afghanistan and it is in their interests.» (<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-22374124>).

This lack of interest towards interpreters and translator generated many controversies, especially among the veterans of war who lived in daily contact with them. In response to this, the British Army officer Alexander Perkins launched a petition in order to review the British policy for Afghan interpreters, calling the attention of the Foreign Secretary William Hague and of the Prime Minister David Cameron. Perkins also writes:

My great-grandfather Winston Churchill, who spent a large part of his career in the army, would have been shocked by the way our government is treating men who risked their lives to help British forces. (<https://www.change.org/p/foreign-secretary-william-hague-protect-all-afghan-interpreters-who-served-alongside-british-troops-and-give-them-opportunity-to-resettle>).

Until now (June 1st, 2015) 96,374 supporters have signed the petition that will be concluded when 150,000 signatures are gathered.

Not only do the governments have this inadequate consideration about interpreters and translators of the war zones, but also, many conference interpreters consider their colleagues as «not interpreters but taxi drivers, people who know a local language and have smattering of English» (<http://aiic.net/page/3196/the-aiic-resolution-on-interpreters-in-war-and-conflict-zones/lang/1>). This is the reason why many people think they do not deserve attention, as they are not professionals they do not worth to be saved. This assertion is totally unfounded because even if they are non-professional linguists they have the same rights and obligations as professional translators and interpreters, and they need special protection as they work in high-risk environments.

For this reason the AIIC in partnership with Red T and the FIT (International Federation of Translators) published a *Conflict Zone Field Guide for Civilian Translators/Interpreters and Users of Their Services*. This document, available in twelve languages (among them Dari, Pashto and Hebrew), is essential both for users of interpreters and translators' services, as for interpreters and translators themselves in order to be aware of the basic rights and responsibilities of this job. (<http://red-t.org/guidelines.html>).

Above all, the rights of the interpreter/translator are stressed, especially those connected to their

safety: the right to protection both during and after the assignment (including also their family if necessary), wearing protective clothing and equipment, the right to receive medical and psychological assistance, and the right to refuse a task if compromising the professional or personal standards and ethics, among others; in addition, the responsibilities of the interpreter are also indicated: impartiality, confidentiality and accuracy.

So, the interpreter must serve all parties equally without expressing his opinions or sympathies, preserving the confidential nature of any information he obtains during his work without divulging it to anyone and imparting the message as faithfully as possible to all parties.

In this guide the right and responsibilities of the users of interpreters and translators are also reported. In particular, it focuses on the behaviour they should adopt and on the information they should provide to the interpreter/translator in order to facilitate his work and do not put him into risky situations. The third part of the guide explains the procedure both the interpreter and the user have to follow in order to avoid inconvenient situations: the three parties involved in the conversation should position themselves in a triangular formation (the interpreter in the middle) in order everyone see and hear each other, not exceeding in turns, speak clearly and with simple words paying particularly attention to the pronunciation/dialect/stress used, the interpreter does not have to transmit a message if he has not understood it but he has to ask for a repetition, avoid private conversation excluding one party and finally the interpreter should not be delegated with any kind of responsibility.

This guide is the first step that should be observed to reach the professional status of interpreter in war zones, recognizing him as an independent and impartial part and to offer the right protection when they find themselves in difficult circumstances. (http://red-t.org/documents/T-I_Field_Guide_2012.pdf).

3.2 InZone

The Interpreting Department of FTI of the University of Geneva (Faculté de Traduction et d'Interprétation) set up a Centre for Interpreting in Conflict Zones (InZone) in 2010 whose aim is to train interpreters who works in war zones.

Interpreters are often recruited because they “know” both the local language and the language of international relief operations, and not because they have been trained as translators or interpreters. Thus, they lack both essential professional skills to perform adequately as interpreters, as well as the necessary professional ethics to support crisis management and humanitarian efforts in a stressful environment. (<http://inzone.fti.unige.ch/files/inzone-mediakit-0913.pdf>)

Working in partnership with many humanitarian organizations among them MSF, UNHCR and

ICRC, the objective of InZone is «to improve communication in conflict zones by delivering virtual and on-site training to interpreters in the field.». The mission of the centre develops on three levels. The first one is the *documentation*, whose aim is to gather documents related to interpreting in conflict zones and the conditions of humanitarian work thanks to an electronic database in order to develop a code of professional ethics for humanitarian interpreters.

The second step is the *training* of the interpreter thanks to the Virtual Institute learning portal, in which interpreters can find learning modules covering professional ethics, skill development in consecutive interpreting, and the support for use on mobile devices, among others.

The last mission is the *community-building*, in order to build a virtual community in the Virtual Institute portal in which interpreters can share experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems, as their job condemns them to live a professionally isolated existence.

(<http://inzone.fti.unige.ch/files/inzone-mediakit-0913.pdf>)

InZone's mission is to give instruments to interpreters in war zone, in order to improve the level of competence in the humanitarian interpretation and the communication among forces in such a fragile environment, in order to reach a peaceful situation.

3.3 IRAP

Established in September 2010 by a volunteer group of law students and lawyers, the Iraqi Refugees Assistance Project is the first organization that provides legal representation to individual refugees seeking resettlement. The project aims to assist children with medical emergencies, women who are survivors of domestic and sexual violence, survivors of torture and also it protects Iraqi and Afghan interpreters who risked their lives to work for the U.S. military.

The team works on the Special Immigrant Visa process of the U.S. and thanks to its pressure things are improving little but the bureaucracy is still an obstacle.

More than 2,000 refugees have been resettled, including Iraqi and Afghan interpreters, and the IRAP is currently working on the cases of more than 350 families. (<http://refugeerights.org/>).

3.4 No One Left Behind

No One Left Behind helps Afghan and Iraqi translators to obtain their U.S. Special Immigrant Visas in order to flee their countries and to resettle them in America providing apartments, furniture, modest financial support during the first weeks and employment assistance, in fact when they leave their countries they are allowed to bring only one suitcase.

It is a non-profit organization run by the veteran Matt Zeller and his interpreter Janis Shinwari, who

saved his life in 2008, when he killed two Taliban who were shooting at Zeller.

The soldier fought five years in order to obtain a visa for his friend and he created a national media campaign that went viral in the US, gathering 113,861 signatures and raising over \$30,000 in order to resettle Janis, who finally arrived to the U.S. in 2013 with his family (<https://www.change.org/p/save-my-afghan-interpreter>). But Janis preferred to use that money to help other Iraqis and Afghan interpreters so together they established the No One Left Behind organization.

Actually the organization has three operations focusing on three areas:

-Operation Welcome Home helps Afghans and Iraqis during their first period in the U.S. especially with housing. «Thus far through Operation Welcome Home we have provided furnishings to 60 Afghan and Iraqi families, totalling nearly 300 people, paid the rent of ten families for three months, and purchased cars for ten families (helping each to gain the job vital to their economic survival).» (<http://www.nooneleft.org/operations>).

-Operation Got Your Back helps interpreters to look for a new job and also it helps them and their families to integrate into American life (English classes, culture courses etc.).

-Operation Lost In Translation instructs US military veterans to navigate the SIV application process in order to accelerate it and to help their interpreters to get the visa. (<http://www.nooneleft.org/>). The majority of interpreters who succeed to reach the U.S. is thanks to the large efforts of veterans who took the cases in their own hands and who promote campaigns in order to save the lives of their interpreters. ([https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The Interpreter Ebook v6.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/vice_asset_uploader/files/1404757485The_Interpreter_Ebook_v6.pdf)).

This is the case of the Afghan interpreter called Srosh, whose marine he served created a fund raising page to finance Srosh's medical examination and that had been successfully concluded eight months ago raising up \$2,285. (<http://www.youcaring.com/medical-fundraiser/no-friend-left-behind/224716>). At the moment, many fundraising campaigns have been initiated, among them one by Matt Zeller who is now fighting for Ehsan, another interpreter who started his SIV process in 2012 but who is still trapped in the bureaucracy (<https://www.change.org/p/help-save-ehsan-the-interpreter-in-afghanistan-who-helped-us-troops>).

“Our goal is to ultimately work ourselves out of a mission – i.e. to resettle all who were promised safety and security in exchange for service.” Matt Zeller, Founder (www.nooneleft.org).

CONCLUSION

Interpreters in conflict zones are a fundamental part in war, they are necessary to bridge the gap between local forces and foreign forces, in order to reach a peaceful situation. Nevertheless their figure is object of prejudices by almost all parts in war. Considered traitors by their fellow citizens because they serve the "enemy" and considered not reliable by the army because they are part of the community they fight against, interpreters are condemned to live in fear, hiding themselves to flee from persecution and certain death.

In order to protect them there are two main points that have to be followed.

The first one is about the professionalization of their job: they should be provided with training in order to follow a "code of work". Only by following this procedure interpreters in war zones can act as professional interpreters, assuming the same rights and obligations as the other kinds of interpreters. Without the official recognition of job, it would be more difficult for them to assert their rights when they are accused of being "spies", helping the enemy and traitors for their homeland.

Secondly, institutions should put in place immediate programs aimed at protecting the life of those loyal people who helped their troops in war. In fact interpreters not only provide translations to the troops but they are also a "protection" for soldiers who would be lost without their help. Interpreters avoid many deaths among foreign soldiers but their actions are not recognized enough important as to give them visas. Governments must stop using interpreters and translators in war in order to follow their economic and politic interests, but they have to take serious measures in order to solve the problems that prevent them to obtain the visas and to provide them the right protection as they were promised.

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