



Confessions of a Mullah Warrior

By Masood Farivar

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Masood Farivar was ten years old when his childhood in peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan was shattered by the Soviet invasion of 1979. Although he was born into a long line of religious and political leaders who had shaped his nation's history for centuries, Farivar fled to Pakistan with his family and came of age in a madrassa for refugees. At eighteen, he defied his parents and returned home to join the jihad, fighting beside not only the Afghan mujahideen but also Arab and Pakistani volunteers. When the Soviets withdrew, Farivar moved to America and attended the prestigious Lawrenceville School and Harvard, and ultimately became a journalist in New York. At a time when the war in Afghanistan is the focus of renewed attention, and its outcome is more crucial than ever to our own security, Farivar draws on his unique experience as a native Afghan, a former mujahideen fighter, and a longtime U.S. resident to provide unprecedented insight into the ongoing collision between Islam and the West. This is a visceral, clear-eyed, and illuminating memoir from an indispensable new voice on the world stage.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this earnest bildungsroman, Farivar tells the remarkable tale of how he went from Afghan refugee to resistance fighter to Harvard University student. Fleeing the increasing violence and political instability in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, the author and his family escaped to Pakistan—and the hardships and alienation of refugee life. The young Farivar entered a madrassa where he studied the Koran intensively and became a devout Muslim. Eventually deciding he had a duty to return to Afghanistan to fight, he left his family to embrace jihad against the occupying Soviet troops. While serving on the front lines, Farivar continued brushing up on [his] Pythagorean theorems, among other things in preparation for the SAT and made his way to an American prep school and later, Harvard. While Farivar's account is indisputably unique and fascinating, the narrative tension frequently slackens as the author relies too heavily on the action alone to drive his story forward. Still, the book succeeds in its in-depth exploration of the radicalization of young Muslim men in the 1980s—and Farivar's path away from extremism. (*Mar.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Farivar, an Afghan mujahideen before going to Harvard, here narrates the trajectory of his life. A child when the Soviets invaded, Farivar fled with his parents to Pakistan, where he was schooled in madrassas and fantasized about returning to Afghanistan to join the jihad against the occupiers. Against his parents' wishes, he followed his dreams and trained at Tora Bora; eventually, he saw combat alongside more fanatical recruits from outside Afghanistan. After the Soviets withdrew, the warlords turned against each other, and the author found his way to the elite Lawrenceville School and then Harvard. Farivar's transition from mortars and AK-47s to the Spee Club and Campus Republicans would be a fascinating tale of cultural adaptation under any circumstances. Given Afghanistan's recent history, however, his story becomes a testimony of sorts, a glimpse at the historical context and cultural values that led an Afghan refugee to take up arms (but eventually choose to set them down again). This selection ends with a question mark, as Farivar returns to Afghanistan to face an ambiguous future. --Brendan Driscoll

Review

"If you liked *The Kite Runner*, you must read this riveting, firsthand account by one of the real Afghan mujahideen. From the hidden world of the madrassas to the front line against the Russians, to Harvard and home again, this is an extraordinary tale of courage and transformation." -- Leslie Cockburn

"I urge you to read this testimony of a holy warrior in the mountains of Afghanistan, who fights Jihad and then makes the cultural journey to America. Like the war poets who told you what it was really like to be in the trenches, Farivar survived to tell us about life on the front lines of the clash of civilizations--and it rings with more truth than any other account of these famous events I've ever read. In these troubled times, this is a book that is brave, honest, humane and full of love." -- Aidan Hartley

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Zoe Harris:

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