

# War refugee lost family in Afghanistan before being shot in Chch mosque attack

Charlie Gates 19:00, Jun 21 2019

Taj Mohammad Kamran had already seen death and war before he came to New Zealand as a refugee. On March 15, his already tough life got harder.

Kamran was shot three times in the legs after a gunman walked into the Al Noor mosque in Christchurch and opened fire. His best friend, Matiullah Safi, died next to him.

He crawled out of the mosque, with blood running down his legs.

But the death and blood around him was not new to Kamran. He had seen it as a child growing up in Afghanistan.



ALDEN WILLIAMS/STUFF

Taj Mohammad Kamran has lived a hard life.

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He was 6 years old when Russian tanks rolled into his homeland of Afghanistan in 1979. By the time he was 7 he had already seen the deadly consequences of war.

"Dead bodies and people bleeding. That was easy. I see dead bodies before I was 7 or 8.

"I had seen everything. Afghanistan life was very hard."



JOSEPH JOHNSON/STUFF

Despite his injuries, Kamran made sure he was in court to hear the gunman's plea in Christchurch on Friday last week.

He remembers struggling to sleep as a child.

"There was shooting and bombing outside the house. Boom boom boom. I couldn't sleep."

When he was 12, a bomb hit his house, killing his two brothers and two older sisters. He and his mother survived because they were both in another part of the house.



Kamran, second from right, revisited Afghanistan after he fled the country as a child.

He fled to a nearby country with his mother, but she died about three years later, leaving him alone for the next two decades.

He came to New Zealand as a refugee in 2007 and found work at a Christchurch food processing plant almost immediately.

He lived by the Avon River in Burwood until 2011, when the February earthquake destroyed his house and his neighbourhood was red zoned. He lived in the emergency shelter at Pioneer Stadium in Spreydon for about two weeks, where he met then Prime Minister John Key. Later, he lived in his car for six months, showering at a gym before heading to work.

"I go to my job and then I go to my car".



Kamran met then Prime Minister John Key after the 2011 Canterbury earthquakes.

Two years ago, he was carrying 2.5 kilograms of beef to a food mixer at work when he hurt his back. He had an operation, but could no longer work.

Despite his troubles, he felt safe in New Zealand and loved the people.

"I was very happy here, it is a safe, beautiful country. Nice people. I love the people.

"In 12 years I not leave Christchurch, I love the place too much. In 2011 there was damage everywhere. My whole community moved to Auckland, but I said no I'm living here. No problem."



ALDEN WILLIAMS/STUFF

Kamran at home in Edgware.

Everything changed on March 15.

"I came here for safety and I'm very happy and I think I'm safe now, but I don't understand that it's not safe and a man can come in and shoot everybody.

"For me, it is a very hard life."

Now, life is a struggle. He has diabetes, an injured back, high blood pressure and his right leg is swollen and numb from the bullet wounds. He gets around slowly on crutches.

"There are small pieces of bullet inside me still. One bullet and a hundred small pieces have gone everywhere.





He worked at a food processing plant in Christchurch for 10 years before he hurt his back.

"It is too painful. It is swollen. I have no power in my leg."

He struggles to sleep once again, but not because of the sound of bombs this time.

"There is too much tension and too much problem. My body is shaking and I'm scared. Life is very hard for me.

"My friend is lost and I don't have any sleep or anything."



ALDEN WILLIAMS/STUFF

Kamran getting his Kiwi citizenship with Christchurch city councillor Vicki Buck in 2014.

Kamran spent his birthday, the day after the attack, in hospital.

"I'm not lucky. March 16 was my birthday. My friends messaged me on Facebook to wish me happy birthday. I took a photo of me in hospital and sent it back to them."

**Stuff**