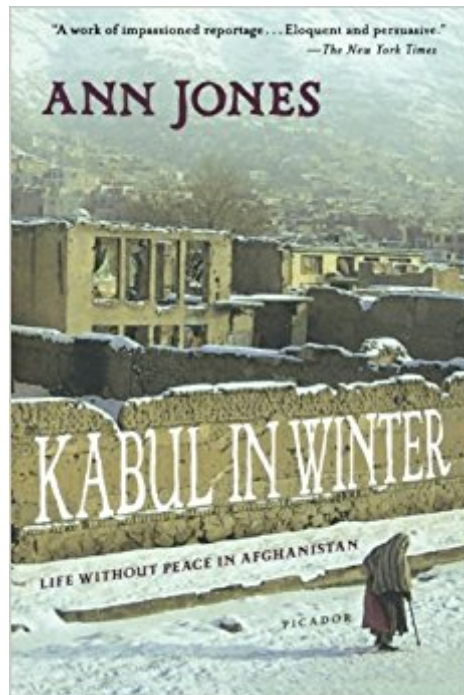


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# Kabul In Winter: Life Without Peace In Afghanistan



## Synopsis

Soon after the bombs stopped falling on Kabul, award-winning journalist and women's rights activist Ann Jones set out for the shattered city. This is her trenchant report from the city where she spent the next four winters working in humanitarian aid. Investigating the city's prison for women, retraining Kabul's long-silenced English teachers, Jones enters the lives of everyday women and men and reveals through small events some big disjunctions: between the new Afghan "democracy" and the still-entrenched warlords, between American promises and performance, between what's boasted of and what is. At once angry, profound, and starkly beautiful, *Kabul in Winter* brings alive the people and day-to-day life of a place whose future depends upon our own.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In February 2003, Jones and her fellow NGO relief workers watched with disbelief and horror as Fox News declared the American war in Afghanistan a success "the Taliban totally defeated, all Afghan women "liberated" and the infrastructure completely restored. The reality they knew on the ground in Kabul was starkly different. Jones (*Women Who Kill*) presents her version of the events in this fascinating volume, which tours Kabul's streets, private homes, schools and women's prison. The political and military history of Afghanistan, as well as its cultural and religious traditions, inform Jones's daily interactions and observations. Describing an English class she taught, for example, Jones says, "Once, after I explained what blind date meant, a woman said, 'Like my wedding.' " Jones focuses particularly on Afghan women, whose lives are often permeated by violence. Her sharp eye and quick wit enable vivid writing, as when she witnesses a fistfight from her

traffic-blocked car: an old man hit by a cyclist socks the cyclist, a young man punches the old man, then a traffic cop joins and socks the young man. Seconds later, all get up and continue on their way. (Mar. 1) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

In this chilling account, Jones, a native New Yorker, recounts her experiences as an aid worker in prisons and schools in post-Taliban Afghanistan. While she explores many elements of Afghani culture (including the macabre national sport of buzkashi, in which horseback riders battle for possession of a dead calf), the subservient status of Muslim women is the topic that interests her most. She evokes a world of outcasts, from war widows to prostitutes to runaway child brides. Ninety-five percent of Afghan women are subject to violence: they are bought and sold, beaten and raped, preyed upon and betrayed by their own flesh and blood. Jones, a frequent contributor to the New York Times, occasionally gets bogged down in too much historical detail, but her impressions are vividly rendered: "Kabul in winter is a state of mind, a mix of memory and desire that lifts like dust in the wind to hide from view the world as it is." This achingly candid commentary brings the country's sobering truths to light. Allison Block Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Ann Jones' "Kabul in Winter: Life Without Peace" is extraordinary: presenting the reality at its most granular level. She links the history of this tormented place from Alexander the Great to the geology created by the collision of the Indian and the Eurasian plates, creating the Hindu Kush where geology becomes destiny and models the complex interplay of the various factions. Much like Frances Fitzgerald's "Fire in the Lake" about Vietnam, "Kabul in Winter" helps make Afghanistan understandable!

An informative book but a tedious read. The first part of the book deals with the history of this country. You almost feel like you should be taking notes in order to keep it all straight. The next part deals with the treatment of women....appalling by any standards. According to her, women simply have no voice and no rights. They are mere beasts of burden to be beaten, traded, enslaved, kept out of public view. Sadly, from what I've read about Afghanistan previously, I think this is accurate for the vast majority of women. This is a book I might refer to for its historical information, but not one I'll read again as I do so many of my other cherished books.

This is a scorcher of a book and Ann Jones is a brilliant writer who makes the brutality of life in Afghanistan so real that the people she writes about jump off the page and into your head and heart. Jones, a journalist, went to Afghanistan to work with an international NGO (nongovernmental organization) that seeks to improve the lives of Afghan women and children. This is a mission that seems impossible, given all the constraints, both cultural and political, that are brought to bear on any logical effort to address the grinding poverty and despair in this unhappy place. Some reviewers have criticized Jones's account as naive, asserting that she does not take into account the political realities surrounding Afghanistan, but that is exactly the reason that I found her book so compelling. From Jones we get no excuses or rationalizations as to why Afghanistan is a perennial pawn in the "great game" of world power. And she makes few apologies for a culture that dehumanizes women and girls, the first step to making it OK for men to trade and treat them like animals (or worse). Jones tells it like it is, which is a very different story than we get from governments and the entrenched international development professionals. Jones was an eyewitness to how big development plans play out on the ground, and she relays her truth in a style that is as unsparing as the rigid, tribal rules that impede progress. This book is wrenching and at times painful to read, but I argue that it is important for anyone who wants to have a full view of our world today and the events that are currently shaping it. While it's clearly true that Ann Jones has an alternate take on the reasons behind Afghanistan's present, foul condition, hers is a voice that needs to be heard and her subjects are people whose stories deserve to be told.

Apparently I took away somewhat different conclusions than did some of your reviewers. The book starts out a little slowly because there is a synopsis of Afghani history. One should definitely wade through it. The author went to Kabul after the war against the Taliban in order to help get education for women up and running. Besides being a teacher, Ann Jones is a reporter, and she has done a lot of research for this book in addition to the actual time she spent teaching. Having been one of the horrified people who wrote letters to Jimmy Carter when we supplied Stinger missiles to the Mujahadeen, I am well aware that both American political parties contributed to Afghani problems. Studying some of the history is required in order for us to pick our way gradually out of this flawed country while still leaving it better than we found it. To blame the imperial powers (Russia, the US and Britain) for the problems in Afghanistan is way too easy. The book makes clear that there is a corrosive element to Afghani culture that needs to be gently excised as we help build schools and plant orchards. (We do plan to plant orchards, don't we?) This book should be required reading for all policy makers from Obama and Biden to the State Department.

Ann Jones explores the lives of people left behind after the long series of (and continuing) war in Afghanistan. She also provides the political background of the present tragic state of affairs that affect the women and children who try to survive in Kabul. Every person in the USA should read this book.

Fascinating reading. Paints quite a different picture than the media.

This book is definitely NOT for the faint of heart, or for true-believers in America-the-good or West-good, East-bad. Jones takes on institutions that have not only failed Afghanistan and failed women, but whose Machiavelian hand can be seen in the deterioration of governments all over the globe whose first concern is not America's. She's done her homework, indeed, put her life on the line to do it, and this volume, if you have the courage to read it, will enlighten you in the most unexpected ways. I learned a lot from this most fascinating and readable book.

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