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Policewoman, Pregnant Teacher Kidnapped and Killed In Afghanistan

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Afghan police continue to investigate after two women -- a police officer and a teacher -- were kidnapped and killed in the southern Afghan town of Trinkot this week.

Afghan police are investigating the kidnappings and killings of a female police officer and a pregnant teacher in the volatile Oruzgan Province.

Local officials say 27-year-old policewoman Feroza and 22-year-old teacher Malalai were kidnapped and killed on the outskirts of Trinkot, the capital of the southern-central province.

Provincial government spokesman Abdullah Hemmat told RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan that the bodies were discovered in the nearby village of Dehyak on December 18.

"It is clear from an examination of the bodies that they were first choked with a rope and then shot dead," he said.

The women, who, like many Afghans, went by one name, were related through their respective marriages to two brothers, and lived in the same house in Trinkot.

Feroza was the mother of two children and was a member of the town's police force, while her sister-in-law worked in a Trinkot school.

Family members told authorities that the two women were last seen on December 17, but did not file missing person reports, according to Hemmat.

"We asked the family why they have failed to report to security services and government authorities that the women were missing," he said. "The family told us 'because of embarrassment and prejudice we didn't want to share this with security agencies and provincial officials.'"

No one has claimed responsibility for the killings, and Hemmat says authorities are looking into possible motives for the crime.

Militants frequently target women who work or study, especially in the country's volatile southern and eastern provinces. Two senior female police officers were killed in the neighboring Helmand province earlier this year.

Afghan women are also frequently subjected to domestic violence. According to Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission, reported cases of violence against women have increased in the country over the past two years.

Hemmat said the local government promotes work and education for women in the province, where Taliban militants have a strong presence.

The main contingent of foreign forces providing security in Oruzgan left the province this week, when Australian troops withdrew from their military base in Trinkot.

Australian troops were deployed in the province in 2005.

Hemmat said Afghan forces, which have been in charge of security in Oruzgan for nearly one year, "are capable" of ensuring citizens' safety.

"We do our best to take additional security measures for women in the workforce," Hemmat said. "But obviously we can't completely eliminate such tragic incidents."

Written by Farangis Najibullah based on reports by RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan