



THIS PAGE: From the series "Syria's Refugees." Dalal, 21, a Syrian refugee from the Damascus suburbs, stands in front of the cave she and her family have been staying in since crossing into Lebanon roughly a week prior. The United Nations estimates that the number of Syrian refugees currently in countries bordering Syria has risen to 600,000, and the registered number of refugees in Lebanon, alone, is roughly 200,000.

On the Front Line

Lynsey Addario dedicates her life to powerful and empathetic documentary work around the globe.

BY JACK CRAGER



LYNSEY ADDARIO

Keeping pace with photojournalist Lynsey Addario is no easy task. Recently she's been shuffling assignments in different parts of the world—including a long-term project on modernization and tribal

culture in India, for *National Geographic*, and a complex series on Syrian refugees for another steady client, the *New York Times*. "I've been traveling to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Syria—and then I did that whole cycle again minus Iraq and Syria," Addario says by phone from Los Angeles, on a brief holiday break with her sister and family. When she's not on the road, Addario divides time between London and New York City, the home base of her agency, VII Photo.

"I'm also writing a book," she says, explaining that it's a memoir of her experiences covering war zones and troubled lands around the planet. "And I have a two-year-old son," she adds with a laugh. "So now I try to be on the road half the time: I used to travel 280 days a year, and now it's an average of two weeks each month." With support from her husband and nanny, she's working out the career-family balance. "There are not a lot of women in this profession who have children," she notes. "I don't think there's an easy answer. It's something that's very hard to juggle."

Juggling, though, she does well. In the decade-plus since Addario was named as one of the PGN's 30 in 2002, she's developed a roster of clients including *Time*, *Vanity Fair*, NPR, and the *Daily Beast*, as well as mainstays like the *Times* and *Geographic*. She credits the PGN's 30 honor—soon followed by the 2002 Infinity Award for Young Photographer of the Year from the International Center of Photography—with opening



ABOVE: From the series "Veiled Rebellion." With face, hair and arms in full view, actress Trena Amiri chauffeurs a friend around Kabul on a Friday... Even in relatively progressive Kabul, men and women glare, honk, and scream at her.

opening doors. "I had been working really hard but sort of under the radar," she recalls, "and then I received some industry recognition, and it really helped with getting more assignments."

Addario's pivotal career moment came in 2009, when she was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship (commonly referred to as the "genius grant"), making her one of only two photojournalists to ever be named a fellow. Other recognition includes the Overseas Press Club of America's Olivier Rebbot Award 2010 for her *Geographic* series "Veiled Rebellion: Afghan Women"; the Pictures of the Year International Feature Photography Award Citation 2010 for her *Time* piece "Dying to

Give Birth: One Woman's Tale of Maternal Mortality (in Sierra Leone)"; and a 2009 Pulitzer Prize as part of the *New York Times* team for international reporting for the magazine cover story "Talibanistan, Sept. 7, 2008."

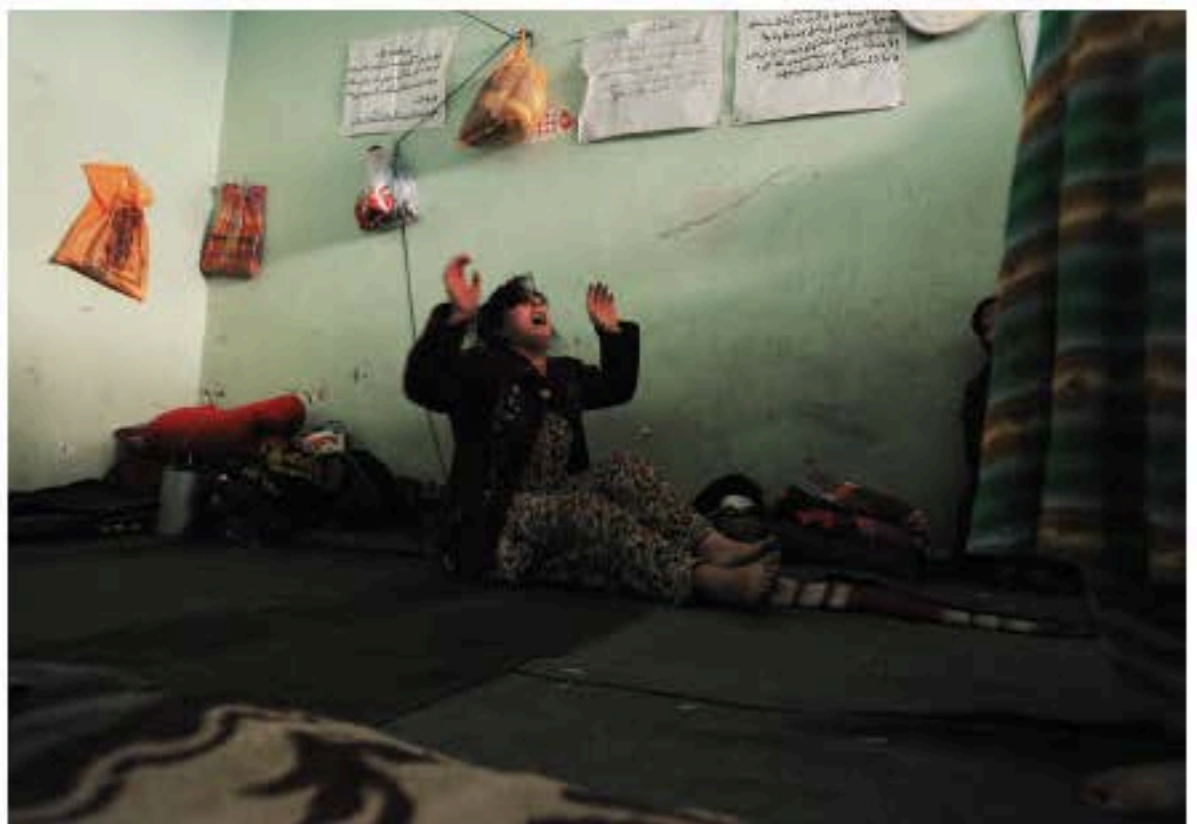
Never one to shy away from danger zones, Addario spent much of the aughts covering US wars and their consequences in Iraq and Afghanistan, bringing her own sense of humanity and empathy to her photographs of people in the Muslim world. She's often found herself in harm's way—even being kidnapped and held at gunpoint twice, in Iraq in 2004 and Libya in 2011. In both cases, she and her colleagues were eventually released as working journalists.

Given such risks, is it frightening to be a woman on the front line? "No," she replies. "I think being a woman is often an asset in

a war zone. Because, if we're talking about combat and the front lines, it's equally dangerous for men and women. If we're talking about working around the margins of war, I think it's an asset because I can go into people's homes, I can interview the women, I have access to this sort of secret side of the society that men don't."

She explains that part of her approach, as a photographer, is to lie low and

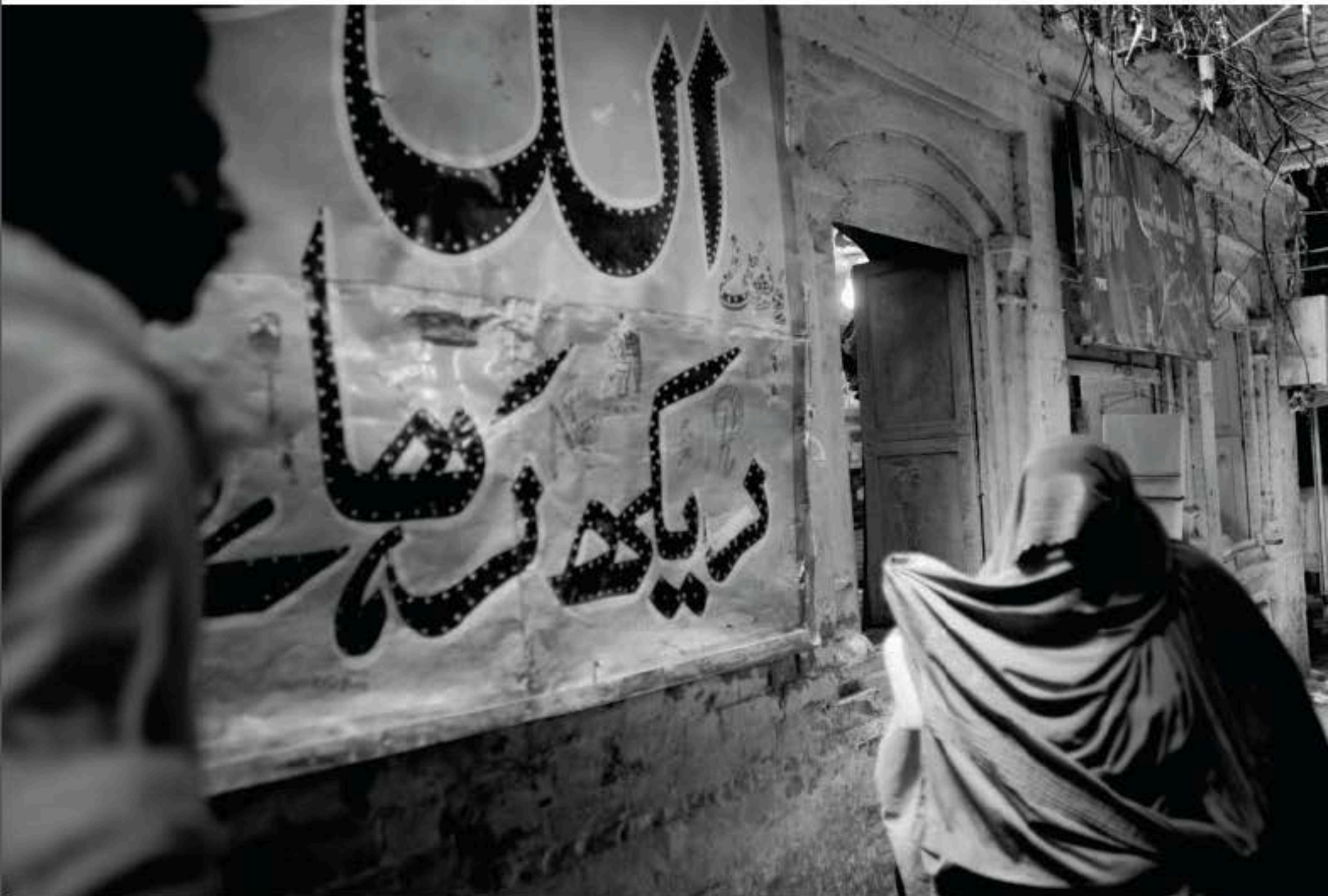
"People tend to underestimate women . . . Especially in countries where women aren't typically working. So they see you and they just, you know, don't take you seriously. And I think that often is a great advantage."



THIS PAGE (TOP TO BOTTOM): Village women attend a health and hygiene class taught by a traveling midwife from a mobile clinic in northeastern Badakhshan Province; Maida-Khal, 22, cries out in a Mazar-e Sharif prison. Maida-Khal has been imprisoned for four years for asking for a divorce from her 70-year-old, paralyzed husband, whose brothers beat her when she could not carry his weight; Fershta, 18, marries Amin Shaheen, son of film director Salim Shaheen, in Kabul. Addario says, "It's very delicate to photograph an Afghan wedding. The women are unveiled and often wear revealing dresses and heavy makeup. They are reluctant to share these images with the outside world."

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Meanwhile, she relies in great part on connecting with people. "I hang out quite a bit. I go back and see the same families many times," she says. "I don't take out my cameras right away—I'm not the kind of



ABOVE: From the series "Talibanistan." Pakistanis walk in front of a yellow sign that reads "God is watching," put up by religious leaders in the Shaheen Market in Peshowar, Pakistan, a conservative Pakistani city close to the Afghan border, July 4, 2008. **LEFT:** Pakistani Taliban fighters in Bar Kambar Khel, in the Pakistani tribal area near the border of Afghanistan. The area is largely under the control of the group named the "Prevention of Vice and Preservation of Virtue" group, which commands nearly 20 percent of the Tribal area.

photographer to barge in with my camera raised and shooting. I have meals with the families. I'm interested: I like people, I'm curious about them, and I love doing interviews as well as photographing."

Her constant work overseas makes for a bit of disconnect with the United States when she returns. "I feel like I'm always sort of a foreigner, even at home," she says. "Or rather, I'm always looking at things with fresh eyes. Which is actually important to me—to stay curious and engaged and to learn. I think that if I become complacent anywhere, I will lose my ability to do my job well."

Her advice for new photographers? "They should not expect anything to be handed to them," she says. "It's not an easy profession to break into. They really have to work hard

and they have to establish contacts, and take the initiative to tell stories, and work their way up. And don't expect to graduate from college and work for *National Geographic* the year you get out of school. I get a lot of e-mails from young photographers looking for, sort of, the quick path. And there is no quick path. You just have to work hard—there's no secret."

Her own tale is one of success following perseverance. "I started in 1996, as a self-taught photographer, at age 21," she recalls. "I knew exactly what I wanted to do when I started photographing, and I never looked back. I was determined and focused: I had no social life, no personal life for many years." She pauses and laughs. "I think people have this misconception about this job, that you can just start at the top. You don't. I mean, if you're lucky you do, but that's not often the case."

Although she is now writing a memoir and shepherding a young family, Addario shows no signs of resting on her laurels—or retiring from photojournalism. "I don't foresee stopping any time soon," she says. "I mean, it's who I am. It's in my soul." ♦