Ziauddin Yousafzai, Education and Women's Rights Activist, UN Special Advisor on Global Education, Chair of the Malala Fund



Ziauddin Yousafzai is the father of education activist Malala Yousafzai and is himself a human rights and women's rights activist and public speaker. Ziauddin was a student leader, school teacher and principal, and community leader in his beautiful Swat Valley of Pakistan. Inspired by his father who was also a teacher, Ziauddin set a high standard for himself to pursue higher education to impress his father and to be successful in life. Ziauddin says that he learned the lessons of care, compassion and wisdom from his mother and five sisters. He, therefore, continues to stand up for the rights of those who cannot speak for themselves and inspires others to do so.

Ziauddin completed his MA in English and his dreams came true when he established a successful school in his native Swat Valley. The school was his world and the world was his school. Then 9/11 came and changed his world. It brought the Taliban into his Valley, to his people, and to his family.

When the Taliban started indiscriminately beheading people, banning girls' education and blasting schools in his hometown, many powerful people chose to be silent. Ziauddin spoke on national and international media resisting the Taliban's atrocities and promoting the right of children's education and peace through active pacifism. His courage and passion inspired many people including his daughter Malala to join him in standing up for the right of freedom and the right of going to school.

Ziauddin's continued defiance to the forces of terror earned him and his daughter top slots on the Taliban's hit list. They tried to silence the powerful voice of Malala when they shot her on 9 October, 2012 but she survived and miraculously recovered this attack. The Taliban's attempt to silence Malala and Ziauddin only made them stronger and more resilient.

Soon after recovering from Malala's ordeal, Ziauddin and Malala reflected deeply and decided to continue their dream of helping young children. With the help of many well-wishers they established the Malala Fund which aims at empowering girls through education to recognize their full potential and be agents of positive change. Ziauddin is Chair and spokesperson for the Malala Fund which is supported by a small but impactful volunteer board and executive team.

Ziauddin is also the United Nations Special Advisor on Global Education and the educational attaché to the Pakistani Consulate in UK. He has been invited to speak and share his perspective by the Queen of England, U.S. President and many heads of states, civil society organizations, schools and media. Ziauddin also writes poetry in his mother language, Pashto, when he finds time.