

# Britain

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Afghan warlord Faryadi Zardad who was sentenced today (Met Police handout)

## Afghan warlord jailed for 20 years at Old Bailey

BY PHILIPPE NAUGHTON, TIMES ONLINE

A former Afghan warlord was jailed for 20 years at the Old Bailey today for a "heinous and brutal" campaign of torture and hostage-taking in his homeland.

In a case that made British legal history, Faryadi Sarwad Zardad, 41, today became the first person convicted and sentenced in the UK for crimes committed abroad in breach of the United Nations Convention against Torture.

Zardad was a military commander during the Afghan civil war whose unit controlled checkpoints at Sarobi on the main road from the Khyber Pass to Kabul from 1992 to 1996. People passing through the checkpoints were forced to pay Zardad and his men, and were subjected to brutal beatings and imprisonment.

He claimed asylum in Britain in 1998 after the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, but was tracked down to a house in Streatham by the BBC journalist John Simpson, and arrested in 2002. The jury in his first trial failed to reach a verdict and he was retried.

Mr Justice Treacy told Zardad today that his crimes had "transgressed the basic rights of humanity", adding: "You were personally involved in these acts of torture and hostage-taking as well as authorising your men."

As he was led to the cells to start his sentence, Zardad lifted his fist three times in salute and shouted in his own language: "Allah is great."

In the landmark case the court heard evidence of summary execution, the slaughter of 10 or 11 men in a minibus, and an old man imprisoned in a metal box and whipped with a bicycle cable. Zardad and his men also kept a "human dog" to savage victims.

Sixteen witnesses gave evidence against Zardad via a satellite videolink from the British Embassy in Kabul, although Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Branch, which led the inquiry, believes that Zardad was responsible for hundreds more offences, including rape and murder. Zardad was convicted yesterday, but sentence was delayed until this morning.

Today Mr Justice Treacy told Zardad he could sit while he passed sentence. He told the former military commander: "This jury has convicted you of two very serious crimes. Their gravity is demonstrated by the fact that most unusually a person who has committed them in another country can be tried and punished for them by the courts of this country.

"That is a position recognised not only by our Parliament, but also by the civilised international community. The reason for this is that these crimes of which you have been convicted are recognised as crimes against humanity which transcend national boundaries.

"You yourself in your evidence denounced such conduct as inhuman while denying your responsibility for those crimes. It is clear to me from the evidence that for a period of over three years you, as a powerful warlord, presided over a brutal regime of terror in areas under your control.

"You represented the only real form of authority, law and government in the areas under your control and you grossly abused your power."