

Interview With Family Devastated by US Drone Attack. The Dead were Completely Unrecognisable

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Cageprisoners interview with Haider whose brother-in-law Mohammed Asghar and his friends became the victims of an unlawful US drone attack.

CP: Could you please introduce yourself?

Bismillahir rahmaanir raheem

Haider: My name is Haider. My brother-in-law, Mohammed Asghar, lived in Peshawar and worked as a money exchanger in the markets there.

CP: Where did the drone attack take place?

H: The attacks took place in North Waziristan, Miranshah in District Ahmadkheel. My brother-in-law had friends he was visiting in Waziristan. As he was a guest there – and as is the custom of the people – many of the locals gathered to welcome him into the area. He was sat with a group of these people from the community when everybody gathered to pray the evening prayer ('Isha) together. The drone attack happened in the middle of the prayers and the entire congregation was martyred.

CP: Were there any Taliban or Al Qaeda in the gathering or were they all civilians?

H: All the people gathered were locals from the community who had come to welcome the new guest to the area. The people are renowned for their hospitality and it is unthinkable for them that somebody would come to visit and they would not have a gathering to welcome them. In total, 31 people were killed. Drone attacks are so powerful nobody can escape them merely injured.

CP: How did you find out this happened?

H: Between our area and Waziristan is an 8 hour journey. The drone attack happened at night time and we all knew about it by the following morning. People who had witnessed the attack had come to tell us and described what they saw of the remnants and damage in the aftermath. They said the attack was so severe that they could not even distinguish the bodies from one another- even the bones of the people were completely blown apart. The dead were completely unrecognisable. My brother in law's coffin was tightly sealed and we were not allowed to open it to view anything. We had the coffin with us for 30 minutes before it was taken away for burial.

CP: Why do you think the US/Pakistan government do this and what do you think they hope to gain?

H: We just don't know. We don't know how much authority Pakistan has given the US to attack our areas and we don't know until when the US are given free license by the Pakistani government to carry out these drone attacks. So far between 1400-1600 people have died as a result of these attacks. Nobody takes responsibility for these civilian deaths. Ask the journalists or officials for the true statistics, we know that it is 1400-1600 civilians, women and children killed. In this, they would have been lucky to even have 11 or 12 'militants' amongst them. These attacks are so widespread that even my brother in law who lives in

Peshawar was made a victim of it. Who do I appeal to? Where can I go? I don't even know who to hold responsible for his death and how I do it.

I am shocked that the US can come to attack Pakistan in this way and Pakistan does not even have the authority to question them on the deaths they are causing. The civilians in all these regions are extremely frightened and fearful. They can't work in the day, nor can they sleep during the night. As soon as they hear the slightest sound of an aeroplane, they flee in panic from their homes and buildings trying to find a place for security. The whole community is in a state of fear and I just cannot explain to you how unbearable these calamities are for the people. Every household has at least half of its people martyred (i.e.: killed) as a result of these attacks. I simply do not understand what the understanding between Pakistan the US is on this matter.

CP: Haider, thank you for taking the time to speak with us and we are sorry for your loss.

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