

Pakistan. CIA Annihilation From The Air: Drone Warfare's Invisible Dead

By [Stop NATO](#)

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After nine months of research and more than 130 interviews, in what is being called one of the most exhaustive attempts by academics to evaluate Washington's drone wars, the Stanford and New York universities' law schools have finally put out a damning report.

According to the new study, just one in fifty victims of the CIA programme of "targeted" drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas are known militants, while between 2,562 and 3,325 people were killed in Pakistan between June 2004 and mid-September this year - of whom between 474 and 881 were civilians, including 176 children.

Based on these and other figures, the report calls the strikes politically counterproductive and damaging, concluding they have killed innocent civilians, ruined the local economy, undermined respect for international law and left the people of the tribal areas psychologically battered, constantly living under the daily threat of annihilation from the air.

The report especially focuses on children becoming collateral damage of strikes, and comes down particularly hard on the common tactic of the "double-tap" strike where initial strikes are followed up by further missiles, killing an even greater number of civilians, and putting fear into the hearts of rescuers who often wait for hours before daring to visit the scene of an attack.

There is no doubt that this meticulous report will go a long way in challenging the dominant narrative about the use of drones in Pakistan and elsewhere. Indeed, an important aspect it highlights is precisely how difficult is it to obtain accurate data on casualties given US efforts to shield the drone programme from democratic accountability, and its failure to ensure basic transparency and accountability in targeted killings or provide details about the programme.

The lack of transparency is compounded by the fact that the areas targeted by drones are under military and militant control, making access difficult for local as well as foreign journalists and thus allowing civilians killed by drones to become 'invisible dead.'

But after the release of this damning report, will anything change? Will the Obama administration relent in carrying out this controversial campaign of death? Many hope that it may just - especially if the report has an impact on the American public.

Coming from American lawyers rather than Pakistani human rights groups, the criticism is likely to resonate a lot more in US domestic debates over the legality of drone warfare.

As Reprieve's director, Clive Stafford Smith, said: "George Bush wanted to create a global

‘war on terror’ without borders, but it has taken Obama’s drone war to achieve his dream.” But Obama’s dream seems to have become Pakistan’s nightmare and it may just be time for the US to wake up from its delusion once and for all.

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