

US Drone Attack Kills at Least 10 Afghan Civilians—including 6 Children

"The American aircraft targeted us," said Samim Shahyad, whose father, brothers, and cousins were killed in the U.S. attack.

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A U.S. drone strike purportedly targeting a suspected ISIS-K vehicle in a residential neighborhood of Kabul, Afghanistan killed at least 10 members of a single family—including [six children](#)—as they were getting out of their car on Sunday.

Relatives of the victims [told](#) the *Washington Post* that the strike—which was the [second attack](#) the U.S. carried out in Kabul over the weekend—"hit a nearby vehicle" that the Pentagon claims was an "imminent" threat.

The civilian victims of the U.S. strike were all "from a single extended family," the *Post* reported.

Samim Shahyad, a 25-year-old journalism student, [told](#) the *New York Times* that the U.S. attack killed his father, his two brothers, four of his young cousins, his niece, and his sister's fiancé. Shahyad added that three of the victims were girls who were just two years old or younger.

"The American aircraft targeted us," said Shahyad. "I do not know what to say, they just cut my arms and broke my back, I cannot say anything more."

One neighbor at the scene of the attack [said](#) in an interview with *CNN* that "not much is left of their house and nothing can be recognized, they are in pieces." The person estimated that as many as 20 people may have been killed in the U.S. drone strike.

"Yet another reason why the U.S. must leave Afghanistan," said Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. "The military presence, and the civilian deaths it's brought, has become a key recruiting tool for terrorists."

Too many children have already died from US drone strikes. We cannot accept one more, let alone 6. [#GroundTheDrones](#) <https://t.co/RWLIZ5FriS>

Capt. Bill Urban, a spokesperson for the U.S. Central Command, acknowledged in a [statement](#) that “there were substantial and powerful subsequent explosions resulting from the destruction of the vehicle” that the U.S. military claimed to be targeting.

Urban suggested that “additional casualties” from the U.S. strike may have been due to “a large amount of explosive material inside” the targeted vehicle.

“It is unclear what may have happened,” Urban added, “and we are investigating further.”

Launched in the wake of a [deadly ISIS-K attack](#) on Kabul’s international airport, the drone strike came just two days before the August 31 deadline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan after two decades of devastating war and occupation.

Despite officials’ claims that the drone assassination program is highly precise and targeted at militants, U.S. strikes have killed hundreds of Afghan civilians in recent years. According to [documents](#) leaked by former Air Force intelligence analyst Daniel Hale—who was [sentenced](#) to nearly four years in prison last month—nearly 90% of the people killed during one five-month period of a U.S. drone operation in Afghanistan were not the intended targets.

In 2019, the United Nations [released a report](#) accusing the U.S. of killing at least 30 Afghan civilians—including 14 children—and violating international humanitarian law with a series of drone strikes in May of that year.

“Maybe now would be a good time to retire phrases like ‘targeted killing’ and ‘precision strike,’ since these phrases have nothing at all to do with what we’re actually doing,” [said](#) Jameel Jaffer, director of the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University.

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Featured image: Ajmal Ahmadi weeps alone in a room after members of his family were killed in a U.S. drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan on August 29, 2021. (Photo: Marcus Yam/Los Angeles Times)

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