

# Prime Minister Cameron confirms Royal Air Force killed two British citizens in Syria

Robert Stevens  
8 September 2015

Prime Minister David Cameron used his Monday statement to Parliament, nominally on the refugee crisis in Europe, to announce that he authorised the assassination of two British citizens in Syria last month.

Reyaad Khan, 21, and Ruhul Amin, 26, died in Raqqah on August 21 in a drone attack carried out by the Royal Air Force (RAF), Cameron said.

The targeted killing of British citizens overseas on the say-so of the prime minister is unprecedented.

Cameron said the two--born in Wales and Scotland, respectively--were ISIL (Islamic State) fighters. The extra-legal killings were carried out “after meticulous planning,” the prime minister said, and was a matter of national “self-defence.”

Although Cameron claimed the killings were solely the result of a British operation, the facts point to them having been carried out in concert with the US.

Cameron said the Obama administration had confirmed that another Briton, Junaid Hussain, 21, from Birmingham, was killed in a separate US air strike on August 24, also in Raqqah.

The killing of Khan and Amin has clear parallels with the extra-judicial drone murders of its own citizens carried out by the US government.

Cameron’s statement underscored the cynical manner in which Europe’s ruling elite are seeking to utilise the tragic plight of millions of refugees, forced to flee their countries as a result of imperialist interventions and intrigues, to prepare further wars of aggression and dispense with the rule of law.

With his usual insufferable hand-wringing, Cameron described the situation facing the refugees who are trying to make their way to Europe--many from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan--as “heart-breaking.”

But the prime minister would say only that the UK would take in a maximum of 20,000 refugees over the

next five years. This paltry quota, which equates at most to 12 people per day, is in keeping with the ruling elite’s indifference to the catastrophe they have helped create in the Middle East.

The refugee crisis--the largest mass migration since the Second World War--was a mere footnote to Cameron’s real purpose: to prepare for a major escalation of the British military involvement in the region. The prime minister justified this on the grounds that the majority of refugees entering Europe are “fleeing the terror of Assad and ISIL.”

But it was Britain, along with the US, France and their Gulf State allies, that deliberately fomented the civil war in Syria as part of their regime-change operation against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and strengthened ISIL in the process.

Concern over public opposition to a British war against Syria, along with divisions as to the efficacy of an operation limited to air strikes, led to a vote in parliament against military intervention on August 30, 2013.

Far from halting British involvement, however, the ruling elite have gone behind the backs of the public, resorting to ever more criminal methods. In July it was revealed that British pilots have been carrying out air strikes in Syria alongside US forces, despite pledges from Cameron and Defence Secretary Michael Fallon that the government would seek parliamentary approval before such action.

Now it is confirmed that the RAF is summarily killing its own citizens.

Kat Craig, the legal director of the human rights organisation, Reprieve, said the drone strikes now routinely carried out by the US were “being copied wholesale by the British government.” She recalled, “Ministers repeatedly promised parliament and the

public that there would be no military operations in Syria without parliamentary approval. The fact that David Cameron has bypassed parliament to commit these covert strikes is deeply worrying--as is his refusal to share what legal advice he was given."

Chris Cole, head of the campaign group Drone Wars, said, "This was the deliberate killing of a British citizen. It is shocking. We have not seen this before."

Cameron claimed that the targeted assassinations did not require parliamentary debate, as he had told the Commons last year, "[I]t is important to reserve the right that if there were a critical British national interest at stake or there were the need to act to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe, you could act immediately and explain to the House of Commons afterwards."

But Cameron presented no evidence as to how Khan and Amin threatened the "British national interest," or how their killings had prevented a "humanitarian catastrophe."

He was, nevertheless, at pains to claim that his government had legal backing to kill the two, stating, "I am clear that the action we took was entirely lawful." He added, "The Attorney General [Britain's principal legal officer] was consulted and was clear there would be a clear legal basis for action in international law."

Given that the attorney general also authorised the illegal war against Iraq, based on fabricated claims of "weapons of mass destruction," this advice is not worth the paper it is written on.

Cameron also argued that the drone attack on the two was in line with the "UK's inherent right to self-defence." He declared, "There was clear evidence of the individuals in question planning and directing armed attacks against the UK." But he declined to give any specifics, stating only that the alleged plans were "part of a series of actual and foiled attempts to attack the UK and our allies," and included preparations "to attack high-profile public commemorations, including those taking place this summer."

Not a word of what Cameron said can be taken at face value. Regarding the killing of Khan, he said there was "nothing to suggest" that he "would ever leave Syria or desist from his desire to murder us at home." He continued, "So we had no way of preventing his planned attacks on our country without taking direct action."

Cameron never bothered to explain how, if Khan

never intended to leave Syria, he could take part in terrorist attacks in Britain. Nor precisely how, if he was really "directing" terror operations on British soil, his killing in Syria would foil such operations.

Even if these allegations were true, that would not alter the fact that the extra-judicial executive murder of a citizen is illegal, i.e., a criminal act. A police state method, it makes a mockery of democratic rights.

Cameron has made clear that he is in favour of British involvement in the bombing of Syria. He has said that he intends to hold a parliamentary vote on the issue in the next few weeks.

His parliamentary speech followed the announcement by President François Hollande that France would start reconnaissance flights over Syria in preparation for beginning air strikes.

Former Defence Minister Liam Fox has said that Britain should also carry out air strikes under the humanitarian pretext of setting up "safe havens" for refugees in Syria. Fox declared, "It is time that action was taken to deal with the root of the problem." He warned, "The policy of attacking ISIS in Iraq but not in Syria is patently absurd, which not only makes us less effective militarily, but diminishes us in the eyes of other partners in the coalition."

Others have not ruled out the use of ground forces. This, they calculate, could be carried out under the pretext of setting up United Nations-run "safe havens" guarded by troops. Andrew Mitchell, the Conservative former international development secretary, told the BBC, "Ideally, Britain would not be involved in putting troops on the ground, but we should be willing to consider that."



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**