

Raid kills 30 civilians in Yemen, including eight-year-old daughter of US citizen assassinated by Obama

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On Sunday, under the cover of a moonless night, Navy SEAL Team 6—protected by armed Reaper drones and helicopter gunships—raided a village in central Yemen. At least 30 civilians were killed, seven of whom were children.

One of these children was the eight-year-old daughter of Anwar al-Awlaki, who was assassinated by a drone missile on the orders of Barack Obama on September 30, 2011. Two weeks after Anwar al-Awlaki's assassination, US drones killed his son, 16-year-old American-born Abdulrahman al-Awlaki.

In the wake of the latest action, Nasser al-Awlaki related to reporters how his eight-year-old granddaughter was shot in the neck, bleeding to death over the course of two hours.

The raid, which took place in the Yemeni province of Bayda, reportedly targeted a suspected Al Qaeda operative's compound. Defense Department spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis initially denied that there were any civilian casualties.

Yet as Sunday wore on, reports from Yemeni authorities and gruesome photos on social media forced the Pentagon to spin its statements more purposefully. On Monday, Captain Davis told reporters that the military was "assessing" claims of civilian casualties. Taking aim at the reports of women killed in the raid, he told reporters to "Take reports of female casualties with a grain of salt."

"Not all female casualties are civilian casualties," Davis asserted. "In many cases, and certainly in this one, females can be legitimate combatants." He claimed that as SEAL Team 6 attacked the village, "female fighters ran towards established positions as though they'd been trained to be ready and trained to

be combatants." He did not specify what role the seven slain children played in defense of Al Qaeda. The inescapable conclusion is that the US special force troops killed everyone they encountered, men, women and children alike.

While the Pentagon quibbles about the definitions of "civilian" and "combatant," it bears mentioning that President Obama himself redefined "combatant" to mean any male of military service age—a definition that allowed him to deny slaughtering civilians in his drone raids.

Trump's first military raid had in fact been planned for months under the Obama administration. The military's Joint Special Operations Command had organized the operation at the behest of Obama, whose administration had overseen relentless aggression against Yemen under the pretext of counterterrorism.

As Obama's days in office wound to a close, the administration decided to leave the raid's fate in the hands of his successor. Trump, who had vowed during his campaign and inauguration to "eradicate" Islamic terrorism by targeting militants and their families, readily signed the order for the raid.

This raid represents a new escalation of Washington's ongoing assault upon Yemen. The Obama administration went to extraordinary lengths to support the aggression upon the impoverished country. The assassination of al-Awlaki, an American citizen, was unprecedented; yet Obama, a constitutional law scholar, dispatched his Department of Justice to argue for the executive branch's right to order the assassination of an American citizen without charging any crime, much less holding a trial. In a feat of judicial gymnastics, the administration—guarding its purported

evidence against al-Awlaki tightly—claimed that the order was carried out with due process.

Together with Obama’s covert operations strikes in Yemen, his administration cooperated closely with the Saudi-led coalition that has pummeled Yemen relentlessly since 2015. Saudi Arabia used the pretext of fighting Houthi rebels to invade the country and install its own puppet government. As the *World Socialist Web Site* reported in 2015, Obama welcomed Saudi King Salman with open arms and signed a billion-dollar arms deal with him to support Saudi Arabia’s attacks upon its impoverished neighbor.

The assault upon Yemen, which has been roundly criticized in the United Nations and by human rights observers, has escalated since then. It is overseen by a joint operations center in Saudi Arabia, where US military advisers work with both Saudi and British military to coordinate attacks that devastate farms, water bottling plants, and, in the case of this latest raid, a school and a mosque. Without Washington’s complicity, the war—which has laid waste to numerous antiquities and cultural sites—would have been impossible.

The United Nations has declared that the country is experiencing a “humanitarian catastrophe.” Well over 10,000 civilians have been killed. An estimated 18 million people need some sort of humanitarian assistance. Nearly 4 million people have been forced from their homes since March 2015. Many have risked crossing the Gulf of Aden to shelter in refugee camps in Djibouti and Somalia (which is itself facing a grave humanitarian crisis). There are currently nearly 2 million refugees. Since the coalition began targeting Yemen, the poverty rate has exploded to 62 percent.

Human rights observers report that the coalition has purposely taken aim at agricultural operations, such as farms raising sorghum, which Yemenis use for bread making. In addition, a naval embargo imposed by the Saudi coalition has reduced imports in a country where 90 percent of staple foods are imported. As a result, Yemen’s civilian population is suffering from a man-made famine in which hundreds of children die every day. Currently, half a million Yemeni children are severely malnourished.

The raid in which Anwar al-Awlaki’s eight-year-old daughter was killed on Sunday might have escaped mention by the Pentagon had it not also resulted in the

death of a Navy SEAL.

Trump heralded the raid as a success, claiming that it had allowed the US to obtain “important intelligence that will assist the US in preventing terrorism.” He lamented the death of the 36-year-old SEAL “in our fight against the evil of radical Islamic terrorism.” He did not mention the death of al-Awlaki’s daughter nor those of the 29 other civilians killed. This is not such a radical departure from the Obama administration; in 2011, press secretary Robert Gibbs glibly stated that 16-year-old Abdulrahman al-Awlaki might have escaped his unwarranted death had he “had a more responsible father.”

Yemen is one of seven countries from which Trump’s widely-reviled executive order bans travel. Obama had previously listed these same countries for consideration of visa waivers.

While many of Trump’s voters might have hoped that his administration would signal a movement away from foreign military intervention, his authorization of force against the impoverished country of Yemen—his first—as well as his refusal to admit Yemeni refugees—indicates that he intends to continue and intensify the Obama administration’s policy of militarism regardless of the costs to either the American working class or to civilians in Yemen, the entire Middle East and beyond.



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