



# “WILL I BE NEXT?”

US DRONE STRIKES IN PAKISTAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**AMNESTY**  
INTERNATIONAL



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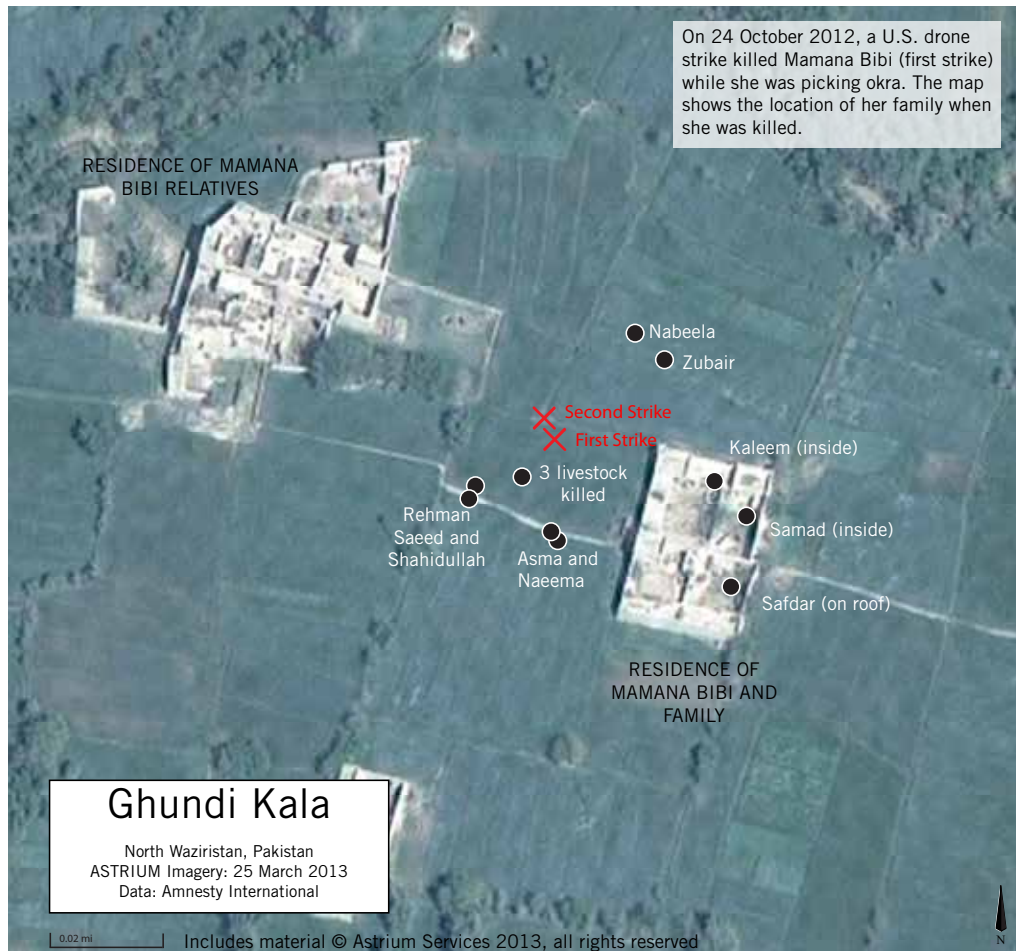
Cover photo: Nabeela, eight-year-old granddaughter of drone strike victim Mamana Bibi.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2012, 68-year-old Mamana Bibi was killed in front of her grandchildren while gathering vegetables in her family's large, vacant fields. She was blasted into pieces by a drone strike that appears to have been aimed directly at her. A year has passed but the US government has not acknowledged Mamana Bibi's death, let alone provided justice or compensation for it.



Satellite image obtained by Amnesty International showing the exact location of Mamana Bibi, killed by US drone aircraft, and the children who witnessed her killing on the afternoon of 24 October 2012.

"*WŠI I be next?*," a new report from Amnesty International, finds that this killing, and several other so-called targeted killings from US drone strikes in Pakistan, violated the right to life and may constitute extrajudicial executions or war crimes. The US appears to be exploiting the lawless and remote nature of the local region to evade accountability for violations of the right to life.

## “I wasn’t scared of drones before, but now when they fly overhead I wonder, will I be next?”

- Nabeela, eight-year-old granddaughter of US drone strike victim Mamina Bibi

Amnesty International reviewed all 45 reported US drone strikes that occurred between January 2012 and August 2013 in North Waziristan, a region in northwest Pakistan which has seen the vast majority of US strikes. It conducted detailed field research into nine strikes, based on rare access to the region and more than 60 interviews with survivors, eyewitnesses, residents and officials.

“Signature strikes”, which do not appear to require specific knowledge about an individual’s participation in hostilities or an imminent threat, may have led to unlawful killings. Amnesty International documented many cases in which residents came to the scene of an initial drone strike only to be struck in follow-up strikes, possibly on the presumption that they too were members of the group being targeted. Yet local communities have little control over the presence of armed groups in their villages and districts.

In July 2012 two drone strikes in quick succession killed 18 laborers, including at least one boy, in Zowi Sidgi village. At least 22 villagers sustained injuries from the strikes, including an eight-year-old girl. Missiles first struck a tent in which men had gathered for an evening meal, killing eight people. Villagers rushed to the tent to search for survivors. They carried stretchers, blankets and water. Then, a few minutes later, the drones fired another set of missiles. Witnesses described a macabre scene of body parts and blood, panic and terror, as US drones continued to hover overhead.

## “Some people lost their hands. Others had their heads cut off. Some lost their legs. Human body parts were scattered everywhere.”

- Zowi Sidgi resident

Not all US drone strikes violate human rights or humanitarian law. The full picture will only come to light when US authorities fully disclose the facts, circumstances and legal basis for each of its drone strikes.

### **Caught in the middle of violence**

In addition to the threat of US drone strikes, people in North Waziristan are frequently caught in the middle of indiscriminate attacks by armed groups and Pakistan’s armed forces. The local population lives under constant fear of inescapable violence by all sides.

Al-Qa’ida-linked groups have killed dozens of local villagers they accused of being spies for US drone strikes. Residents of Mir Ali told Amnesty that bodies are routinely seen dumped by the side of streets with written messages warning that anyone accused of spying for the US will meet the same fate.



Mamana Bibi was killed by a US drone aircraft while tending to her crops on the afternoon of 24 October 2012.

Residents of North Waziristan told Amnesty International they could not report abuse by armed groups to local authorities, for fear of retaliation. At the same time, some residents said unidentified men threatened them for providing information on drone strikes to Amnesty International.

People injured—from drone strikes, attacks by armed groups or Pakistan armed forces—have died from their wounds because hospitals were inaccessible or local medical help was inadequate.

### **Denied Justice**

Survivors of drone strikes and families of the victims have little or no chance of securing justice. US authorities have failed to acknowledge responsibility for specific strikes, let alone establish a mechanism for investigating potentially unlawful killings and providing redress where appropriate. Moreover, in all of the cases Amnesty International investigated, the victims and their communities said the Pakistani government either failed to provide compensation or other assistance, or that it was inadequate.

After drone strikes, armed groups have in some cases recovered dead bodies and shifted them to unknown areas, which impedes identification of those killed. Misinformation and politically driven propaganda about drone strike casualties is rife, making it especially difficult for observers to corroborate claims about the identity of those killed. For this reason, Amnesty International went to great lengths to independently verify all information on drone strikes documented in this

report. Ultimately, the onus is on the US government to conduct systematic, independent and comprehensive investigations into allegations of potentially unlawful killings.

In May 2013, President Obama promised to increase transparency about drone strikes. But the Administration has yet to officially disclose any new information about drone policy, the legal framework or particular strikes. The Administration’s approach to oversight and public accountability has been to describe malleable “policy standards”—rather than real legal limits—leaving the door open to abuse.

**Key Recommendations to the US Government:**

- President Obama should disclose the facts and legal basis for the killings documented in this report. He should immediately commit to ensuring independent and impartial investigations into these killings and any other cases where there is reasonable ground to believe that drone strikes resulted in unlawful killings.
- The Intelligence and Armed Services committees of Congress, which are charged with oversight of the CIA and Department of Defense, respectively, should promptly launch independent and impartial investigations into the killings documented in this report, and all cases where there is reasonable ground to believe that drone strikes resulted in unlawful killings.
- The US government should ensure that victims of unlawful drone strikes, including family members of victims of unlawful killings, have effective access to remedies and compensation. Where there is sufficient admissible evidence, the US should bring those responsible to justice in public and fair trials without recourse to the death penalty.
- The US government should end its practice of secrecy and disclose key factual and legal information about the drone program, including all available information on the number and identity of people killed or injured from drone strikes in Pakistan.

Read more: <http://amnestyusa.org/drones>



# “WILL I BE NEXT?”

## US DRONE STRIKES IN PAKISTAN

This report documents attacks by remotely piloted aircraft or ‘drones’ operated by the USA in Pakistan’s tribal areas between 2012 and 2013. The US appears to be exploiting the lawless and remote nature of the region to evade accountability for its drone program, including killings that may constitute extrajudicial executions or war crimes. Amnesty International conducted detailed field research based on rare access to North Waziristan, where the vast majority of drone strikes have occurred.

Amnesty International research includes cases of so-called “rescuer attacks” in which residents came to the scene of an initial drone strike only to be struck in follow-up strikes, possibly on the presumption that they too were members of the group being targeted. Yet local communities have little control over the presence of armed groups in their villages and districts.

Apart from the threat of US drone strikes, people in North Waziristan are caught in the middle of deliberate and indiscriminate attacks by armed groups and Pakistan’s armed forces. Al-Qa’ida-linked groups have killed dozens of local villagers they accused of being spies for US drone strikes.

Drone strike victims and their families have little chance of securing justice. US authorities have failed to acknowledge responsibility for specific strikes, let alone establish a mechanism for investigating potentially unlawful killings and providing redress. The Pakistani authorities have also failed to provide adequate compensation or other assistance to victims of drone strikes and other violence in the region.

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