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DIGITAL cameras are to be handed out free to tribal leaders in Pakistan today to document the death and devastation caused by US drone strikes.

The number of remote-controlled drone strikes against suspected Taleban and al-Qaeda militants has increased hugely in the past two years, but residents of Waziristan say the true death toll among innocent civilians is not being reported because journalists cannot get access to the region.

A Loya Jirga (Grand Council) of Waziri tribal leaders is being held in Islamabad today, and human rights lawyers will distribute an initial batch of 50 cameras to community leaders.

They will be asked to photograph the effects of drone strikes with the cameras, which will show when and where the pictures were taken. The information will go to a central databank accessible to the public.

The campaign has been organised by Pakistani lawyers and human rights groups. CIA officials claim that the drone strikes, which are not officially acknowledged by the White House, cause minimal civilian casualties, but residents and independent researchers say that hundreds of innocents have been killed and injured, including many women and children.

"The cameras will tell the rest of the world what is happening, and who is actually being killed in an area where the flow of information is being controlled and manipulated by the very perpetrators of the killing machine," Mirza Shahzad Akbar, a lawyer representing civilian victims of drone attacks, said.

The 300th strike in Pakistan since 2004 was made last week and drones are targeting suspected militants once every four days in the tribal areas.

About 2000 people have been killed by missiles fired from remote-controlled drones that are principally operated from Creech Air Force Base in Nevada.

In June last year, John Brennan, President Obama's chief counter-terrorism adviser, claimed that there had not been "a single collateral death" from a drone attack in the previous year. However, independent researchers say that up to 800 innocent civilians have been killed by drones.

Noor Behram, who has photographed many strike sites, claims that there may be as many as 15 civilian casualties for every militant killed.

Human rights lawyers representing the victims filed legal papers in Islamabad yesterday. They are demanding the immediate arrest on murder charges of a CIA lawyer who has admitted authorising drone strikes.

John A. Rizzo, until recently acting general counsel for the CIA, told Newsweek that the "targeted killing" was "basically a hit list ... the Predator [drone] is the weapon of choice, but it could also be someone putting a bullet in your head."

The lawyers claim that Mr Rizzo, now retired, has committed crimes under Pakistani law, including murder and conspiracy to wage a war of aggression. They are threatening to sue police in Islamabad for failing to extradite him to face trial in Pakistan.

Kareem Khan, a plaintiff in the legal action, claims that in 2009 his home in Machikhel, Waziristan, was attacked by missiles fired from a US drone. His 18-year-old son and his brother, a schoolteacher, were killed. Mr Khan says that none of those killed or injured was involved in terrorist activity.

Critics of drone strikes point out that in an area where many men carry guns and militants tend to live with their families, distinguishing a terrorist from a non-combatant is exceptionally difficult.

The strikes are unofficially condoned by Pakistan, but a recent poll showed that 90 per cent of Pakistanis oppose the use of American drones.

Jemima Khan, the former wife of the cricketer Imran Khan, donated the cameras. Clive Stafford Smith, a British lawyer of the campaign group Reprieve, said: "We need complete transparency. The burden of proof is on the CIA to show they are getting it right."