

By Rob Crilly

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Lawyers acting for relatives of people killed along the border with Afghanistan launched legal proceedings against John Rizzo, who was the acting general counsel for the American intelligence agency until he retired, accusing him of murder for his role in approving targets.

The drones programme is hugely controversial in [Pakistan](#) where its opponents say it has killed more than 2000 civilians since 2004.

Mirza Shahzad Akbar, a lawyer based in Islamabad, said his team was collecting evidence from 28 strikes and was trying to identify other individuals who were implicated in strikes – from drone operators to intelligence agents.

"The UK is providing intelligence for the drone strikes," he said. "Out of 28 strikes which we are investigating, we are now looking to see which of those they were involved in."

On Monday he lodged a first incident report at an Islamabad police station against Rizzo, accusing him of six murders as well as conspiracy to kill a large number of Pakistani citizens.

In an interview with Newsweek earlier this year, Mr Rizzo, 63, admitted approving drone targets.

"How many law professors have signed off on a death warrant?" he said.

The case put together by Mr Akbar centres on three strikes.

The first, in North Waziristan, hit a house during Ramadan, killing three relatives of a 15-year-old boy, who also lost his legs.

The second case is brought by Kareem Khan, a journalist whose brother and son were killed by a drone in 2009. Last year he lodged a murder case against Jonathan Banks, the then CIA station chief in Islamabad who had to be whisked out of the country.

And the third complaint is brought by Maezol Khan, whose son had been sleeping outside when he was killed by shrapnel from a drone strike South Waziristan, also in 2009.

Mr Akbar said his team was piecing together evidence from other strikes and would use it to launch proceedings in the US and UK against anyone involved in flying drones, supplying intelligence or approving their use.

"It will be like the Nuremburg trials. If you follow an illegal order you should be held to account. If you kill an innocent person, that's murder," he said.