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The Pakistani government is warning of a new rift with the United States after a CIA drone strike that killed the head of the Pakistani Taliban. Hakimullah Mehsud and six other militants died on Friday when U.S. missiles hit their vehicle in North Waziristan. Mehsud had a \$5 million bounty on his head and was accused of responsibility for thousands of deaths. The attack came just as the Pakistani government had relaunched peace talks with the Taliban. In a broadcast exclusive, we air a documentary that highlights the stories of civilians directly impacted by drone attacks in Pakistan: "Wounds of Waziristan," directed by Madiha Tahir. "Waziristan is only half the size of New Jersey. How would it feel if bombs rained over New Jersey for nine years?" asks Tahir in the film. "Would you be frightened? If they killed your son, your cousin or your husband, and got away with it, would you be angry? You probably couldn't forget about it if you tried. You'd be haunted."

AMY GOODMAN: We turn now to a new film called *Wounds of Waziristan*. It's by Pakistani-American journalist Madiha Tahir. Madiha traveled to Northwest Pakistan to interview people affected by the U.S. drone war. Today we air the film in a *Democracy Now!* broadcast exclusive.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: There's a wide gap between U.S. assessments of such casualties and non-governmental reports. Nevertheless, it is a hard fact that U.S. strikes have resulted in civilian casualties, a risk that exists in every war. And for the families of those civilians, no words or legal construct can justify their loss. For me and those in my chain of command, those deaths will haunt us as long as we live.

MADIHA TAHIR: What does it mean to be haunted by loss?

[translated] How is your brother's condition?

SADDAM HUSSEIN: [translated] When he's alone, he doesn't do well. He's OK when he is with someone. He remembers his baby girl a lot. She was his love.

MADIHA TAHIR: So the story isn't so much about the dead. It's the way they haunt the living, the way they linger, the way they hang on.

The U.S. began bombing Pakistan in 2004. Now it's nine years later, and the American conversation on drone attacks is only just beginning.

I've lived most of my life moving between America and Pakistan. One sees itself as the center of the world, and the other is on the margins. But Waziristan, where most of the drones attack, is at the margins of that margin. Like so many Americans and Pakistanis, I knew very little about the place.

Waziristan is part of what's called the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, or FATA. It's in Pakistan, and it borders Afghanistan. And it has been bombed before, nearly a hundred years ago by the British when they occupied India. The British used the tribal areas as a buffer zone. They bombed it to suppress rebellion. They called it "air policing." They said there was no law here, so force was necessary.

Waziristan is only a day's drive from the capital, but checkpoints dot the border. No one can go

there independently. Pakistan's security forces have killed many people here. The insurgents have, too. And now the American drones are doing the killing.

When it comes to language, nobody describes the insurgents—or the Pakistani military's tactics—as precise. But that very word, "precise," is often thrown around in discussions about the American drone program. These attacks are described as "neat," "surgical" tactics in precision-based warfare. They seem to suggest that killing can be like surgery. You can take out the bad without disturbing the good. No consequences for anyone. No sorrow. No loss. They promise a death that isn't a death at all. And that's why drones are becoming acceptable among Americans as a way to kill in Yemen, in Somalia and in Pakistan.

And Waziristan? Waziristan is made to seem a world away.

So how could I be haunted by what I didn't know? Ghosts can only haunt if we feel their presence. And the dead can only persist if the living can recall them.

Karim first made that world real to me. I met him in 2011. Here's me playing a radio story I had done about him.

... Pakistan since 2004. They're controlled by the CIA, and they're supposed to be secret. The U.S. doesn't confirm or deny the strikes, and it generally doesn't release information on who's been killed. But the local and international media do report on the attacks.

KARIM KHAN: [translated] In 2009, my home was attacked by a drone. My brother and son were martyred. My son's name was Hafiz Zaenullah. My brother's name was Asif Iqbal. There was a third person who was a stone mason. He was a Pakistani. His name was Khaliq Dad.

Their coffins were lying next to each other in the house. Their bodies were covered with wounds. Later, I found some of their fingers in the rubble.

As you know, my son had memorized the Qur'an. He was a security guard at the girls' school, and he was studying for grade 10. My brother had a master's degree in English. He was a government employee. He loved to debate, but he was so short, he didn't reach the dais, so they wouldn't give him many chances to make speeches.

MADIHA TAHIR: I met Saddam a couple of years later. He's a school-going teenager with a shy smile and a quiet, apologetic demeanor.

SADDAM HUSSEIN: *Yaar*, sorry.

MADIHA TAHIR: It's OK.

The attack just missed him. He was sleeping next door.

But when he talks about the attack, he's completely serious.

SADDAM HUSSEIN: [translated] It happened at 9:00 p.m. On my home.

MADIHA TAHIR: [translated] On your home?

SADDAM HUSSEIN: [translated] Yes.

MADIHA TAHIR: Who died?

SADDAM HUSSEIN: [translated] My sister-in-law and my niece were martyred. When the attack happened, my mother told me to get my sister-in-law. I told her, "OK, you go. I'll get her." I already knew she was martyred, but I didn't want to tell my mother, because she would cry.

After the attack, my brother came home. He asked about his baby daughter. I told him she was alive. But he found out. He went into shock. We took him to the hospital. They gave him an IV. After some days, we sent him to a hospital in Peshawar. The doctor there prescribed some medication. That helped him a little.

MADIHA TAHIR: This is Pakistan. And this is America. What if someone brought death to your hometown? That's Waziristan. And that's New Jersey. It's where I grew up. We moved there after a military dictator began destroying Pakistani society. The events that would force my family out would also wound Waziristan.

GEN. MUHAMMAD ZIA-UL-HAQ: [translated] The government of Mr. Bhutto has ceased to exist. The whole country is under martial law. National and provincial assemblies have been dissolved.

MADIHA TAHIR: That man was General Zia-ul-Haq. Those were the 1980s. Pakistan's tribal

areas were being used as a staging ground for the American war against the Soviet Union.

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN: We have with us six of the Afghanistan freedom fighters. There's a man here whose wife was killed in front of their two children. Another one has lost his brother in the tunnel.

MADIHA TAHIR: They're still losing brothers. Waziristan is only half the size of New Jersey. How would it feel if bombs rained over New Jersey for nine years? Would you be frightened? If they killed your son, your cousin or your husband, and got away with it, would you be angry? You probably couldn't forget about it if you tried. You'd be haunted.

The British thought you were all savages. Now the Americans think you're all militants.

AMY GOODMAN: Chris Woods, can you talk more about the redefinition of "civilians" outlined in *The New York Times* piece, President Obama embracing this disputed measure of counting civilian casualties, in effect counting all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants?

CHRIS WOODS: This revelation really is extraordinary, that any adult male killed in effectively a defined kill zone is a terrorist, unless posthumously proven otherwise.

ALYONA MINKOVSKI: U.S. drone strike that's killed eight alleged militants along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

LI DONGNING: A U.S. drone strike on suspected Islamist militants in Northwest Pakistan has

killed at least 10 people there.

ERIN BURNETT: Five al-Qaeda militants were killed in a U.S. drone attack.

NIC ROBERTSON: Three U.S. drone strikes have killed five suspected al-Qaeda militants.

ZAKKA JACOB: At least 45 suspected militants have been killed by missiles launched by U.S. drone aircraft.

BILL O'REILLY: Now they're looking around like this.

KEVIN OWEN: An airstrike on Sunday killed five alleged militants.

BILL O'REILLY: What we do now is we find out someone having a Big Mac in Islamabad, they're out of here.

UNIDENTIFIED: These reports of these alleged deaths of children and innocent civilian casualties, in general, are complete rubbish.

MADIHA TAHIR: That's Javeria's [phon.] funeral photo. She was less than a year old. The photos of many of the people living in the tribal areas don't exist, so local journalists began to take photos to document their deaths. Their deaths would have to stand in for their lives.

NOOR BEHRAM: [translated] Around seven children were martyred in this attack. It also struck a home. Twenty-one people were killed in this attack—seven women and three children. When I arrived, there were bodies everywhere. This child was killed in that attack, too. There were one or two other kids, as well.

MADIHA TAHIR: This is Shahzad Akbar. He's Karim's lawyer. They've filed a case against drone attacks in Pakistani courts. He told me why it's difficult to narrate his clients' lives for the court and the media.

SHAHZAD AKBAR: For example, you know, when I have a client and we want—OK, this was a person who was killed, so we'd like to construct his life on photographs. You know, you have family photos and—of when he was young, when he was in school, when he was in teens and when he grew up—in all those photos. They're missing. They're not there, because, you know, you don't have the culture of taking pictures for that matter.

NOOR BEHRAM: [translated] This attack was in South Waziristan. When I got there, I saw body parts—hands, feet. When a drone attack happens, the media claims to know how many terrorists were killed. Actually, you only find body parts on the scene, so people can't tell how many have died. That's why the media reports it incorrectly.

KARIM KHAN: [translated] Our Pakistani government thinks of itself as a front line in this war. They only visit after an attack to check if they've destroyed us completely and to see if the body is in pieces or intact. That's all.

MADIHA TAHIR: I asked Saifullah Khan Mehsud to explain the Pakistani government's relationship to the tribal areas. Saifullah Khan is a researcher at the FATA Research Center. He's from South Waziristan himself.

SAIFULLAH KHAN MEHSUD: FATA is like Federally Administered Tribal Areas. I mean, it's governed by an archaic law that was introduced by British in that area, known as the Frontier Crime Regulation Act. So it's still that system whereby, you know, the president—the governor, on behalf of the president, appoints a political, you know, agent in that area. The office of the political agent basically has all the judicial and legislative—legislative, the executive and the judicial power, you know, in his hands, in the hands of the political agent. So, you know, there is absolutely no accountability. If a political agent, you know, kind of comes up and makes a decision, a judicial decision or any kind of decision, there is no other authority, no body there available which can actually hold him accountable.

MADIHA TAHIR: People in the tribal areas call this colonial-era system "the black laws." Under these laws, people living in the tribal areas didn't even get the right to vote 'til 1996. So the "tribal areas" are a political category, a place haunted by its past. It just means a place where colonial laws still exist, and the Pakistani constitution doesn't apply, a place with at least four different kinds of security forces, from militias to the army. The Pakistani state still claims there is no law here, so force is necessary. It means a place that's kept invisible.

And that's been to the advantage of the U.S. and the Pakistani army. America has paid billions to the Pakistani security forces. Together, they have used Pakistan, and especially Waziristan. During the Cold War, it was to battle communism and to fund and train the mujahideen.

REPORTER: ... entering Afghanistan, this is the source which is potentially the most damaging. This is a training camp for Afghan guerrillas, or mujahideen. These camps aren't supposed to exist on Pakistan's soil, a contradiction which is circumvented, not very neatly, by the technical point that they are in an area only partly controlled by Pakistan—the tribal areas near the border with Afghanistan.

MADIHA TAHIR: Now, it's to support the U.S. as it occupies Afghanistan. So, America, the Pakistani security forces and the insurgents they've created, they're linked. And for decades they've been destroying Waziristan together. And now America is just blowing the place up. The reason? They say there's no law here, and force is necessary.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: So neither conventional military action nor waiting for attacks to occur offers moral safe harbor, and neither does a sole reliance on law enforcement in territories that have no functioning police or security services, and indeed have no functioning law.

KARIM KHAN: [translated] You asked me a question about terrorism. Can I ask you one? What is the definition of "terrorism" or "terrorist"?

MADIHA TAHIR: [translated] I don't know. What do you think it is?

KARIM KHAN: [translated] I think there is no bigger terrorist than Obama or Bush, those who have weaponry like drones, who drop bombs on us while we are in our homes. There are no greater terrorists than them.

MADIHA TAHIR: [translated] Did you play with her?

SADDAM HUSSEIN: [translated] Yes. She had just learned to say "Dad." She used to say, "Dad, Dad." But now she's been martyred.

They circle overhead, seven or eight of them.

MADIHA TAHIR: [translated] You mean in a week?

SADDAM HUSSEIN: [translated] No, no! I mean daily. They fly very low at night. It's very stressful. A lot of people lose their minds. They go to Peshawar for treatment. When they come near, I go into my room and close the door to shut out the noise. I don't like the sound at all.

MADIHA TAHIR: Noor Behram had showed me the photos of the dead. But I wanted to understand how they come to haunt the living. I spoke with Dr. Javed Akhtar. He's a psychiatrist. Lots of people who suffer from the violence in Waziristan come to him. He didn't want to appear on camera, but he told me about how the bombing impacts people.

DR. JAVED AKHTAR: [translated] The suddenness of a drone attack and its impact—the things that are happening here now, and especially the drone attacks—they happen completely out of the blue. Within a second your world is turned upside down. You can't hug a body that's been blown apart. You can't hold him and cry. So the neighbor or brother or sister or wife of the dead, she doesn't know what to do. Whom can she hold near? She doesn't get closure.

MADIHA TAHIR: So what does it mean to be haunted by loss?

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Just as we are haunted by the civilian casualties that have occurred throughout conventional fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, but as commander-in-chief, I must weigh these heartbreaking tragedies against the alternatives.

MADIHA TAHIR: There is no escape for the haunted. There are no alternatives for the haunted. The loss lingers. The sorrow persists. In a haunted land, the dead do not exist among the living. The living exist among the dead.

SADDAM HUSSEIN: [translated] I feel guilty about being alive. My sister-in-law is dead. Why am I alive? I should be dead, too. That would be good. I wish I had also been martyred that day. Death would have been better than this kind of life.

MADIHA TAHIR: [translated] Why do you say that?

SADDAM HUSSEIN: [translated] I say it because I'm sick of drone attacks. I'm tired of innocent people being martyred. That's why I don't like my life anymore. I study, but I'm not really interested in it anymore. When I hear a drone has attacked, I feel ill all day.

KARIM KHAN: [translated] Even if we are afraid, what can we do? Run away and leave our homes and land? No, that can't happen.

AMY GOODMAN: The new film, *Wounds of Waziristan*, directed and narrated by Pakistani-American journalist Madiha Tahir.

Democracy Now!

media fellow Messiah Rhodes co-produced and edited the film. This has been a

Democracy Now!

broadcast exclusive. You can watch the film online at democracynow.org, tell your friends, share on Facebook and Twitter. You can also watch our

[interview](#)

with a Pakistani family whose grandmother was killed in a U.S. drone strike. Her two grandchildren, eight-year-old Nabila and 12-year-old Zubair—at the time, those were their ages—were wounded in the attack. They joined us in our studio last Thursday after becoming the first drone victims to testify before Congress. You can tune into

Democracy Now!

on Tuesday, when we'll be joined by three-time Academy Award-winning director and screenwriter, Oliver Stone, joins us for the hour to talk about the

Untold History of the United States

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