



The tragic story of a Baloch family from the ‘town of mass graves’

On Feb 18, 2019, online Baloch activists shared a picture of a smiling eight-year-old child with a caption that read that Bohair was an eight-month-old infant when his father, Atiq Ur Rahman, was abducted by Pakistan military and he is still missing.

Atiq was taken away during a late-night raid on his house in Khuzdar Tootak village, which is known for the discovery of mass graves containing bodies of former missing persons.

Bohair’s father was not the only person victimized that night. More than two dozen men from his extended family were picked up and disappeared by the military in one go. These victims include 80-year-old Mohammed Raheem Qalanderani, the grandfather of little Bohair. It is not the worst yet. Two students belonging to the family, Naeem and Yahya, were killed at point black during the raid the same night.

The military took away all the valuables they could get hold of and burnt the rest into ashes. The houses were demolished. They only left behind “half widows”, helpless female members and young children like Bohair.

Hasla Baloch, a female member of the victimized family, released a video message on February 18, the eighth anniversary of the incident.

“All male members of our family were abducted. Some of them were released later, but 13 are still missing, including my elderly uncle, Mohammad Raheem Khan Qalandrani (80), my uncle Dr Mohammad Tahir, Fida Ahmed, Nadeem, Nisar Ahmed, Aftab and three sons of my aunt — Waseem, Ateeq and Khalil.”

In January 2014, two mass graves were found by a shepherd in Tootak containing over hundred tortured bodies. Amnesty International urged the government to investigate the issue. However, as usual, nothing happened.

The area had been controlled by by Shafeeq Mengal, the leader of an extremist Islamic group called Haq-e-Tawar. He is known for his close ties with the Pakistan military and has been helping intelligence agencies to, in his own words, crush “the so-called Baloch nationalists”.

Tootak was “purged” of all its male members in joint operations by Shafiq Mengal’s men and the military while women were left helpless. Many families fled to the neighbouring Afghanistan as displaced persons. They have urged the UNHCR in Afghanistan to recognize them as political refugees and help them resettle in a safe country.

“We’re still waiting to be resettled,” says Halsal in her video message.

She also mentions that several other family members had been abducted by the military even before the February 18 incident.

“Zafar and Asif, my two cousins, were picked up and disappeared from Surab, Balochistan. Irshad was abducted from Lakpas area of Quetta and Imran from outside the Civil Hospital, Quetta. My uncle, Zia-ur-Rahman, was abducted while he was travelling from Quetta to Tootak,” she adds. All remain missing to date.

Halsal fears that the bodies found in the mass graves might belong to her missing family members.

Courtesy: [Balochistan Times](#)