

26 July 2016



Photo of dead Sunnis in Rada'a after US bombing of Yemeni Sunnis.
Posted on Twitter by #White (البيضاء), 26 October 2014.

This is what war looks like. These Yemeni women and their children were, I assume, non-combatants. They were not soldiers. They were presumably not insurgents or terrorists. They were unlikely to have been a threat to anyone.

They were living their lives as best they could in a country which is torn apart by warring groups. The country is 'over there somewhere'. Many people would not be able to point to Yemen on a map. "They're Arabs, aren't they." Those people can probably point roughly to places such as London, Paris, New York, Nice, München or Sydney. Even if they can't, they would know that those are cities where 'our' people live and that atrocities have been perpetrated there by bad people.

The map-pointers, if from the USA, would know of places like Ferguson, Memphis, Baton Rouge, Dallas, St Anthony and North Miami. They would probably agree that black lives matter and that white lives matter.

Do Yemeni lives matter? Syrian lives? Iraqi lives? Palestinian lives? Sudanese lives? Nyaw lives?

The women and children in the photo were not shot at close range by their enemy. Did they have an enemy? They died because someone made a mistake. They weren't the intended target of the airstrike. The targeting was directed by someone who lives in the USA and possibly went to bed and had a good night's sleep.

Every year, thousands of people die 'over there'; people who have no enemy, who are not soldiers, who are not combatants. They are often written about and talked about as 'collateral damage'. "We didn't mean to kill them, but that is the price of war." Whose war? Who pays the price? Certainly not the people who pull the distant triggers or drop the bombs from afar. Certainly not the people who read about it at breakfast or see it on the news at dinner time.

If it is discussed at all, it is likely to be in the vein of, "Well, they killed 84 of ours in Nice, and 130 of ours in Paris, and 2606 of ours in the New York World Trade Centre." Did they? Did those now dead women and their children drive a truck into a crowd or shoot revellers in

a theatre or fly planes into tall buildings? Did these dead women and their children ever hold a gun?

The Australian government is involved in the deaths of women and children such as these. Australia has war planes 'over there', supporting the USA and 'our' European 'allies' in bombing and strafing the 'enemy'. That same Australian government commits atrocities in the name of saving lives by not allowing refugees to drown at sea when fleeing the atrocities 'over there' and attempting the hazardous sea crossing from Indonesia to 'over here'. The local atrocities occur at offshore detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island. In the name of saving lives, they ruin them.

People who want to not be dead like the women and children in the photo, flee to crowded refugee camps from which they try to get to places that are like 'over here', where they believe there are opportunities for a better life. They come up against closed borders or end up in more crowded camps while waiting for resettlement. Sometimes they are shot at by border guards who are protecting 'our way of life', because our way of life is more valuable than their lives.

Drone planes are becoming more and more popular as bearers of death, as computer virtual war games are becoming more popular and virtual deaths become more normal with people in their homes. Someone can sit in a secure, warm, safe place in the USA, far away from any danger, and navigate a drone over 'enemy' territory and let death fall down onto what looks like the enemy. Often the bombs find the women and children. Whose enemy are they?

Those who target the attacks rely on 'intelligence', an egregious misuse of that word.

I am not criticising those soldiers on the ground, who are ordered to go 'over there'. I am not criticising the pilots of the war planes, nor the manipulators of the drones. I am disgusted with the governments, our governments, which in our name commit atrocities, telling us that this is to prevent atrocities being committed against us.

Whose lives matter? You choose.