

NASSER AL-AWLAKI: “MY GRANDSON WAS KILLED BY HIS OWN GOVERNMENT”

While the nation grieves over the senseless death of Trayvon Martin and the missed opportunity to hold his killer responsible for that death, there is another senseless death of an American teenager of color where an attempt is continuing, after previous failures, to hold accountable those responsible for the lawless way in which this life was arbitrarily ended.

Exactly one year ago today, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Center for Constitutional Rights filed a lawsuit (pdf) on behalf of Nasser al-Awlaki (father of Anwar al-Awlaki and grandfather of Abdulrahman al-Awlaki) and Sarah Khan (wife of Samir Khan). The defendants in the case are former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Commander of Special Operations Command William McRaven, Commander of Joint Special Operations Command Joseph Votel and former CIA Head David Petraeus. The complaint cites violation of the Fourth and Fifth Amendments as well as violation of the Bill of Attainder Clause in the targeted killings of Anwar al-Awlaki, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki and Samir Khan. Oral arguments on the suit begin tomorrow.

Given what is known about the role of Barack Obama in these killings and his personal authorization of the “kill list” in his Terror Tuesday meetings, I find it perplexing that he is not also a defendant in this case.

The complaint seeks damages in an amount to be determined at the trial and any other relief the court deems just and proper.

Coincident with the filing of the complaint in the United States District Court for the

District of Columbia a year ago, the video above was released. Today, an op-ed by Nasser al-Awlaki was published in the New York Times, helping to focus attention on tomorrow's opening arguments. The video and op-ed are truly gut-wrenching.

From the op-ed:

I LEARNED that my 16-year-old grandson, Abdulrahman – a United States citizen – had been killed by an American drone strike from news reports the morning after he died.

The missile killed him, his teenage cousin and at least five other civilians on Oct. 14, 2011, while the boys were eating dinner at an open-air restaurant in southern Yemen.

The grandfather describes his anguish as he seeks answers to the question of why his grandson was killed:

Nearly two years later, I still have no answers. The United States government has refused to explain why Abdulrahman was killed. It was not until May of this year that the Obama administration, in a supposed effort to be more transparent, publicly acknowledged what the world already knew – that it was responsible for his death.

Nasser al-Awlaki describes the huge impact an education in the United States made on his life and how he put that education to use when he returned to Yemen. More importantly, he puts the actions of the United States in killing his son and grandson significantly at odds with the values of the United States when he was a student here:

A country that believes it does not even need to answer for killing its own is not the America I once knew. From 1966

to 1977, I fulfilled a childhood dream and studied in the United States as a Fulbright scholar, earning my doctorate and then working as a researcher and assistant professor at universities in New Mexico, Nebraska and Minnesota.

/snip/

After returning to Yemen, I used my American education and skills to help my country, serving as Yemen's minister of agriculture and fisheries and establishing one of the country's leading institutions of higher learning, Ibb University. Abdulrahman used to tell me he wanted to follow in my footsteps and go back to America to study. I can't bear to think of those conversations now.

The op-ed closes with a direct and haunting question:

The government has killed a 16-year-old American boy. Shouldn't it at least have to explain why?

Sadly, we can state with confidence that even before the proceedings open the government will argue that it does not have to explain why it killed Abdulrahman. Because terror. Even more sadly, it is quite likely that the court will side with this senseless and lawless argument. Because terror.

What has our country become?