



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on December 22, 2016

“Honor-killing” Shock: Murdered Muslim Girls Replaced With Imposters

It sounds like the plot of an *X-Files* episode or something you’d read in a supermarket tabloid, but it’s actually a case of truth being stranger than fiction. It involves five Pakistani girls apparently murdered in “honor killings,” a happening not uncommon in their Muslim land. What occurred next, however, was truly bizarre.

The girls were replaced with imposters, in anticipation of an investigation by authorities.



One replacement even had her thumbs burned badly enough so that she couldn’t be identified, the result of a “cooking accident” according to her parents.

The strange saga began six years ago in the Pakistani hinterlands. As the *Washington Post* [writes](#):

It was just a few seconds, a video clip [shown below] of several young women laughing and clapping to music, dressed for a party or a wedding in orange headscarves and robes with floral patterns. Then a few more seconds of a young man dancing alone, apparently in the same room.

The cellphone video was made six years ago, in a village deep in Kohistan, a rugged area of northwest Pakistan. It was the last time the young women, known only as Bazeegha, Sareen Jan, Begum Jan, Amina and Shaheen, have ever been definitively seen alive.

What happened to them remains a mystery. Their fates have been shrouded by cultural taboos, official inertia, implacable resistance from elders and religious leaders suspected of ordering their deaths, and elaborate subterfuges by the families who reportedly carried out those orders.

In Pakistan, hundreds of honor killings are [reported each year](#) — we don’t know how many go unreported. This one might have faded into the past as well were it not for the actions of a few individuals, including Afzal Kohistani, a brother of the boy seen dancing in the video. Kohistani, you see, is also a victim: The Muslim cleric who leads the local *jirga* (tribal council), allegedly ordered the deaths of not only the girls but his whole family for dishonoring the tribe.

What then transpired did so with the compliance of the local community, and the brutality was striking. As the *Post* tells us, “According to court filings and interviews with people who investigated it [the case], the families confined the girls for weeks, threw boiling water and hot coals on them, then killed them and buried them somewhere in the Kohistan hills.”

The boy and his brothers were all killed as well — all except for Afzal — he and the remainder of his family fled to save their lives.

Coming from a wealthy family and being a college graduate, Afzal Kohistani had the will and wherewithal to seek justice. Not surprisingly, though, he received no help from local and provincial officials and instead was castigated for questioning the *jirga*’s decree. He says he’s the first in his



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province to speak out against honor killing, and that he's accused of having "defamed" his culture, religion, and tribe. As the *Post* reports, "'This has destroyed my family. The girls are dead, my brothers have been killed and nothing has been done to bring justice or protect us,' said Kohistani, 26, who has received death threats. 'I know I will probably be killed, too, but it doesn't matter,' he said in an interview last week. 'What happened is wrong, and it has to change.'"

Kohistani finally petitioned Pakistan's Supreme Court, but the court dismissed his case in 2012. Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry apparently disagreed with the move, however, as he personally took up the cudgels for Kohistani. And the case was just reopened in November.

"Wild West" in the East

In many ways, large parts of Pakistan are like an Islamic Wild West. Kohistan is apparently so remote that two fact-finding missions ordered by Chaudhry were flown into the region by helicopter. The investigators found they didn't have translators who could understand the locals' dialect (there are [more than](#) 300 languages and dialects in the country). The villagers would claim the girls were alive, and they initially presented three young ladies who supposedly were the girls, but wouldn't let investigators speak with them privately.

Upon being shown pictures of the young ladies and their alleged imposters, experts in the United Kingdom determined there was only a 14-percent chance they were the same individuals. In fact, Kohistani was able to identify them as relations, providing their exact names.

After his case was reopened, a third fact-finding mission was launched, involving state officials armed with government identification documents that included the heights and thumbprints of the victims. This was when the girl with the charred thumbs was presented; officials also found that two of the girls produced were too young to be the victims. The government's determination is that they all were imposters.

Kohistani's case is still pending, but whether justice will be done remains a question. Even when such cases do get to court, there still may be "no punishment because the law allows victims' families to 'forgive' the perpetrators — who are often their own relatives," writes the *Post*. And while Pakistan's central government enacted a new law in October that makes it easier to punish those committing honor killings, critics say punishment still isn't mandated and forgiveness can still prevent justice.

What the hapless girls, and the boy, did in the video appears most innocent. It certainly isn't the type of scandalous fare often seen in social media (note: the posting of the video on the Internet years ago did exacerbate the Kohistanis' problems). Yet perhaps Kohistan village's *jirga* subscribes to the doctrine of late Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini, who once [reportedly stated](#):

Allah did not create man so that he could have fun. The aim of creation was for mankind to be put to the test through hardship and prayer. An Islamic regime must be serious in every field. There are no jokes in Islam. There is no humor in Islam. There is no fun in Islam. There can be no fun and joy in whatever is serious.

Whatever the case, the mentality in question is far afield from the Western mindset, as Colonel Ralph Peters explained in his excellent 2009 [piece](#) "TALIBAN FROM OUTER SPACE." Warning against the deadly mistake of projection — ascribing your own priorities and sense of virtue to others — he wrote that "we still hear the deadly cliché that 'all human beings want the same basic things, such as better lives and greater opportunities for their children.'" Using the example of Afghanistan, which shares a border and tribal Islamic culture with Pakistan, he then rhetorically asked, "How does that apply to



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Afghan aliens who *prefer* their crude way of life and its merciless cults? When girls and women are denied education or even health care and are executed by their own kin for minor infractions against the cult, how does *that* square with our insistence that all men want greater opportunities for the kids?"

In this age of globalism and open-borders advocacy, these certainly are questions to ponder.



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