**Taliban: We Slaughtered 100+ Kids Because Their Parents Helped America**

Militants who attacked an army-run school in Peshawar claim it’s retaliation for U.S.-backed efforts to crush a group that's helped protect al Qaeda.

LONDON—The unprecedented slaughter Tuesday of at least [132 students](http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/pakistan-school-massacre/pakistan-school-attack-taliban-militants-kill-126-peshawar-n269011) at a school in Peshawar, Pakistan, shows in the most gruesome possible way that the Pakistani Taliban, known as the TTP, have not yet been defeated or brought under control by the Pakistani military’s recent offensives. Certainly that was the objective of the attack: the school is a private one run by the army for the children of soldiers.

“The TTP is ready for a long, long war against the U.S. puppet state of Pakistan,” a TTP commander told me when I reached him on his Afghan cellphone. “We are just displaced, but we are still in positions to attack wherever we want,” said Jihad Yar Wazir.

Yar Wazir justified the killings as fitting retribution. “The parents of the army school are army soldiers and they are behind the massive killing of our kids and indiscriminate bombing in North and South Waziristan,” which are the TTP strongholds. “To hurt them at their safe haven and homes—such an attack is perfect revenge.”

But the children are innocents, I said. What about them, I asked?

“What about *our* kids and children,” he said. “These are the kids of the U.S.-backed Pakistani army and they should stop their parents from bombing our families and children.” Yar Wazir went on: “Those kids are innocent because they are wearing a suit and tie and Western shirts? But our kids wearing Islamic shalwar kamiz do not come before the eyes of the media and the West.”

Yar Wazir says the TTP (Tehrik-i-Taliban) has a long list of attacks that it will carry out in Pakistan against the security forces, whose efforts to crush the group are supported by the United States. The regions where it is strong have served as a refuge for al Qaeda, which is the main American target.

A Peshawar-based journalist, author, and terrorism expert, Aqeel Yousafzai, says today’s attack is a big blow for Pakistan’s counterterrorism strategy and policies. “The army public school was not only for army kids. Most of the kids are civilians’ kids, and what is worse is that the media reached the school before the rapid response force” of the police or military.

The TTP’s retaliation for the recent offensive against it was “rapid and huge,” says Yousafzai, and all the more of a shock because “the school is located in very sensitive place surrounded by army checkpoints.”

According to eyewitnesses, six attackers came in a car, set fire to it, and then entered the school compound at about 10 a.m. by scaling the wall. “We thought it must be the children playing some game,” a worker at the school told Reuters. “But then we saw a lot of firearms with them.”

It appears the attackers had little interest in taking hostages. One is reported to have blown himself up, along with many victims, but detonating a suicide vest. The killers went from classroom to classroom mowing down teachers and students alike. The latest reported death toll is 80 children and 46 adults, but that is expected to rise. As of early afternoon some of the attackers still appeared to be putting up a fight.