

Is the Assassination of Iranian Scientist/General at IRGC a Criminal Act?

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Islamic Theology of Counter Terrorism

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The recent assassination of an Iranian nuclear scientist sparked different reactions around the world, with some praising the act while some others claiming it was a criminal act or an act of terrorism. On 27th Nov 2020, an Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh was assassinated in Tehran by multiple assailants. The news of the assassination spread very quickly across print, electronic and social media internationally, with people giving their opinions on the incident. One of those who not only condemned but classified the assassination “a criminal act” was former director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States of America, Mr John O Brennan.

In his **tweet** posted on 28th Nov, Mr Brennan said:

“This was a criminal act and highly reckless.”

He continued in the third post on Twitter:

“These assassinations are far different than strikes against terrorist leaders and operatives of groups like Al-Qaeda and Islamic State, which are not sovereign states.”

Mr Brennan had claimed that the assassination was nothing but an act of crime and the strikes that the CIA carried out against terrorist leaders were completely different than the pre-planned assassinations in sovereign countries, such as Iran, in his opinion. The world still remembers that when he was the director of the CIA from 2013 to 2017 at the time of the Obama presidency, U.S. carried out hundreds of Drone Strikes in the Afghanistan-Pakistan regions, which violated the sovereignty of Pakistan. Many of those drone strikes undoubtedly killed many wanted Al-Qaeda terrorists, but they also killed many civilians including women and children. Again, it should be noted that all this happened under the watchful eye of Mr Brennan. So, the question arises that should these assassinations be also classified as criminal acts? Who should be blame for those deaths if not Mr Brennan and his boss, former President Mr Obama?

According to **the investigative reports** by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism:

There were 430 confirmed US drone strikes in Pakistan from 2013-2017. In those attacks, 424-969 civilians were killed and there were 172-207 children among them.

These strikes were in clear violation of the sovereignty of Pakistan and Pakistani government at that time also publicly protested against those strikes, but they continued anyway under the leadership of Mr Brennan. This obvious hypocritical oversight by Mr Brennan, which is revealed in his tweet of condemnation of the assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, shows that his opinion in this case is motivated by his political dislike of President Trump’s administration as well as Israel. We would be wise to remember that U.S. pursued some of the most anti-Israel policies under the leadership of Mr Brennan and his former boss.

In his second statement, Mr Brennan differentiates between the assassinations of the Iranian nuclear scientist and terrorist leaders. However, Mr Brennan should perhaps refresh his memory that the U.S. has designated Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) a **Foreign Terrorist Organisation** in 2019 and Iranian regime is designated world’s top state sponsor of terrorism. It should be noted that Mohsen Fakhrizadeh was not just the chief nuclear scientist in Iran but he was also a brigadier general in the IRGC.

It was also reported in the **new report** back in 2010 where Fakhrizadeh was mentioned as an IRGC officer and a professor at Imam Hossein University. In 2018, in Israeli PM Netanyahu’s televised presentation, the first ever **photograph of Fakhrizadeh** was publicly revealed. Known by many as the ‘father of the Iranian regime’s nuclear bomb’, Fakhrizadeh is on the UN sanctions list, and has had travel restrictions bestowed upon him.

According to Western intelligence, Fakhrizadeh was head of Iranian nuclear programme, “**Project 111**” where he worked with a team to create a nuclear bomb for Iran. According to ***The New York Times***, Fakhrizadeh was the number one target of Israeli intelligence agency Mossad. Mossad was allegedly involved in the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists, some of whom were Fakhrizadeh's deputies, in the 2010s.

Any leader, commander or associate of a designated terrorist organisation comes automatically under terrorism classification and their killings would therefore be justified, such as an **assassination of commander of Al-Quds Force** General Qassem Soleimani in Jan 2020. Therefore, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh was a legitimate target and his killing was completely justified.

Iran is the only country that openly and repeatedly threatened to **wipe Israel off the face of the earth** if they had a nuclear bomb, which is why the state of Israel does not want Iran to possess nuclear weapons. The Arab countries also have deep concerns about Iran having nuclear warheads. In March 2018, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman said in his interview that they have no intention to have nuclear weapons but if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, they will follow suit as soon as possible. It means KSA would not hesitate to **acquire nuclear warheads** if Iran develops it. It is reported that Israel possesses nearly 90 -100 nuclear warheads, but did not officially declare it and Pakistan is the only Muslim country that has nuclear warheads. According to the **report** Pakistan possesses nearly 160 nuclear weapons, but the actual number of nuclear weapons of Israel and Pakistan are not known as both countries have not yet **signed the Non-proliferation Treaty** (NPT).

The year of 2020 was the year of mourning for Iran, in which two high ranking IRGC commanders were assassinated and several others died from natural causes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is reported that more than **30 important Iranian figures** including **13 IRGC officials** have died due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, there were at least 10 mysterious explosions in Iran, which appeared to target **missile sites, power plants, petrochemical centres** and **nuclear enrichment facilities**. The origin of the explosions is largely still officially unknown but some Iranian and Western officials **hinted that the cause of explosions** could be Israeli cyber-attacks and/or covert U.S. and Israeli strikes or sabotage. Moreover, it was reported that in August Israeli spies from Mossad's Kidon unit assassinated Al-Qaeda's second in command Abu Mohammed al-Masri along with his daughter Miriam, who was reportedly being groomed for a leadership role in Al-Qaeda, the heart of Iranian capital of Tehran. This particular assassination once again brought Iran's very close ties with Al-Qaeda back into the conversation.

Iranian regime has conducted dozens of terrorist attacks across the world and is designated a state sponsor of terrorism. Therefore, any direct or indirect attack on Iranian regime's assets, its officials and its proxies cannot be classified as an act of crime or terrorism as it was falsely claimed by former CIA director John O Brennan. This was not an attack on civilians but on a man, who was a member of a U.S. designated terrorist organisation the IRGC as well as father of the nuclear programme of a regime that routinely threatens its neighbours and other countries with death and destruction. The world is safer with Fakhrizadeh not breathing amongst us anymore. Such attacks that neutralize high profile terrorists should be welcomed, not criticized or condemned.

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