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Today we look at a damning new report that reveals how U.S.-led airstrikes against Islamic State militants in Iraq have killed far more civilians than officials have acknowledged. An on-the-ground investigation by the *New York Times Magazine* titled “The Uncounted” found the actual civilian death toll may be 31 times higher than U.S. officials admit. We interview one of the survivors featured in the report. Joining us from Erbil, Iraq, Basim Razzo describes the 2015 U.S. airstrike on his home in Mosul, in which his wife, daughter, brother and nephew were killed. Video of the strike on his home shows a target hit with military precision.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: And I’m Juan González. Welcome to all of our listeners and viewers around the country and around the world. Today we spend the hour looking at a damning new report that reveals how U.S.-led airstrikes against Islamic State militants in Iraq have killed far more civilians than officials have acknowledged.

The Pentagon claims its air war against the self-proclaimed Islamic State has killed few civilians. But an on-the-ground investigation by The New York Times has revealed the U.S.-led military coalition is killing far more civilians in Iraq than it has acknowledged. The Pentagon claims just 89 of its airstrikes have killed civilians since 2014. But the Times found the actual rate of civilian deaths may be 31 times higher than the U.S. is admitting. In fact, [the report](#) reveals that as many as one in five coalition airstrikes on ISIS targets in Iraq resulted in civilian deaths.

The reporters write, “In terms of civilian deaths, this may be the least transparent war in recent American history.” The investigation comes as U.S. military officials continue to insist coalition bombing in Iraq has been precise in hitting its targets. This is Army Lieutenant General Stephen J. Townsend.

ARMY LIEUTENANT GENERAL STEPHEN J. TOWNSEND: I reject any notion that coalition fires were in any way imprecise, unlawful, or excessively targeted civilians. I would argue that this is, I believe, the most precise campaign in the history of warfare, and we have gone to extraordinary measures to safeguard civilian lives.

AMY GOODMAN: But *The New York Times* investigation reveals many of the American-led airstrikes against Islamic State militants actually killed civilians. One of the survivors they interviewed, Basim Razzo, described a coalition airstrike on his home in Mosul, Iraq, in 2015 in which his wife, daughter, brother, and nephew were killed. Video of the strike on his home shows a target hit with military precision.

Well, today we are joined by that man, Basim Razzo. He's joining us from Erbil, Iraq, via *Democracy Now!*

video stream. We're also joined in studio, here in New York, by the two reporters who co-authored this

New York Times

investigation headlined "The Uncounted."

Azmat Khan is an investigative journalist and a Future of War fellow at New America and Arizona State University, and Anand Gopal is an assistant research professor at Arizona State University and the author of *No Good Men Among the Living*. I want to start off in Erbil, Iraq, with Basim Razzo. Basim, that is not actually your longtime home. You lived in Mosul until 2015. Can you describe what happened on that fateful night when your home was hit by a U.S. airstrike?

BASIM RAZZO: Good morning, Amy. Thank you for having me on your program. That night, as I said in my story, I went to bed around 1:00. I had just checked my daughter to see if she was asleep, and I lied down. And then I woke up to a devastating explosion. Did not realize what had happened. I felt that I was in a nightmare, but then I felt that something had happened, because I looked up to the skies and I could see the stars.

There was a terrible smell in the air. And then I started feeling my legs, pinching myself. I thought I was in a dream or in a nightmare, but no, it was reality. I looked to the left at my wife, and all I could see was debris. And I started shouting her name—"Mayada, Mayada." She did not answer me. I started shouting at my daughter, Tuqa. No answer. And then I started shouting at my brother's house, but I could not hear a sound.

Minutes later, I could hear a sound from far away, and it seems that it was the groundkeeper that we have. His house was about 500 meters from my house. Minutes later, he started shouting at me. He said "Uncle Basim, Uncle Basim, I am coming, I am coming. But I need to get a ladder so I can climb up. Are you OK?" I said to him—his name is [inaudible]. I said

[inaudible] "Please, help me. I think I am very hurt and something is broken. I cannot move."

I tried to stand up, but I fell down. I reached to my back because I felt my back was warm. And I touched my back, and then I felt something in my left arm. Something was warm. And it was blood. My back has been injured. My left foot had broken. My bed was in a v-shape, which resulted in a break to my hip. I tried to just move a little bit, but I could not move at all.

So minutes later, I could hear our groundkeeper climbing up to me. And then he came to me and he said "Are you OK? Are you OK?" I said, "I am badly hurt. What has happened to the other house?" That was my brother's house. He said "I don't know." But I could hear a female sound. And then when I started shouting at her, it was my sister-in-law, Azza. And she said "Basim, everybody's gone."

But I could not see anything. It was very dark. The bombing has damaged the electricity. The street was dark. Everything was dark. And then about half an hour later, I could see somebody was walking, entering the farm with a torch light. And they climbed up the ladder and three members of ISIS were looking down at me. So the first thing I said to them, I said, "Are you happy?" They looked at me in disgust and they left me. They climbed down the ladder and they left.

But they had called an ambulance, but they did not let the ambulance come right away.

Because usually when there is a bombing, most of the time it is followed by a second bombing, so they wanted to stay out. So they left for another like 15 minutes. And then when they could hear that the planes were out of the sky, they ordered the ambulance to enter my farm.

And they took me down, put me on the ambulance, and they rushed me to the hospital. When I reached the hospital, it was chaos. I was disoriented. I didn't know what was happening. I was in pain. And then I looked around and I could not know anybody. It was all ISIS members. But some person, he tapped on my shoulder and said, "Uncle Basim, don't worry, I know you are here, my son." He said, "I will be here for you. Don't worry. Don't worry."

So he started rushing me—he cleaned my wound in my back. They did some x-rays for me. They did a CT scan for—they were afraid that I have like brain damage or hemorrhage. Thank God, I did not have anything. They put a cast on my left foot. And then I woke up the next

morning around 10:00 with my brother-in-law and another friend, and they had told me what just happened. They told me that all my member family are gone.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Basim Razzo, our deepest condolences to you and your family. You mentioned that your brother's house was next door. How many total members of the family were in both houses, and how many survived, and what kind of injuries did they have?

BASIM RAZZO: In my house, it was me, my wife, and my daughter. Two lost their life—my wife and my daughter. In my brother's house, which was about 20 feet away from my house, it was my brother, his wife, and his son. Only his wife survived. So total, four deaths, two survivals.

AMY GOODMAN: And can you describe the last day with your wife and your daughter?

BASIM RAZZO: Well, usually, before ISIS, I could come home late, like 10:00 or 11:00. But since ISIS entered Mosul, it is better for me and more comfortable for me to be home early. I would sit with my family, sit with my brother's family, after sundown. We will go out to the farm. So it was just a regular everyday. I would come home from work around 5:00 or 6:00. I'd have dinner with them.

AMY GOODMAN: You had had a party the night before at your brother's house?

BASIM RAZZO: We had a party, like a party for women. And my daughter and my wife attended that party. And then we just have tea. And then when it's—and it is sundown, when the temperature cools down a little bit. Because you know, it was September. It is very hot in September in Iraq. So about 8:00 or 9:00, we would go out to the front yard. We would have tea, maybe some cold drinks. Maybe we will have some fruits. And then we would stay late until like 10:00 or 11:00. And that was my hours before my accident.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: And your mention of the strike—how often were these airstrikes visited on Mosul or on your neighborhood in particular? Were these regular occurrences or was this an unusual occurrence in your neighborhood?

BASIM RAZZO: Well, at that time, there was not that much bombing, before the liberation of Mosul. You would hear some bombing every now and then, but it was not that often. But you could hear drones in the sky. But for bombing, it was not that often.

AMY GOODMAN: There is a picture in the *New York Times* investigation of your daughter Tuqa on the night before the airstrike. She's got that sparkler you describe.

BASIM RAZZO: Yes. She had found it somewhere. I think it was—I don't know if we had bought it earlier for her birthday, but it was left somewhere, and she had found it. And she lit it. And I was shouting at her because it was dangerous to light it inside. I told her, "Tuqa, honey, why don't you go outside?" She said, "No, it's not working. I think it is damaged because of the humidity, so it is not sparkling that much. So I will be safe. I'll be safe." So thank God she was safe. But she lost her life later.

AMY GOODMAN: We're going to break and then come back and hear what happened next. Has the U.S. claimed responsibility for what it did to your family? We will be joined by the two reporters who have investigated the attack on not only your home and your brother's, but so many others in Mosul, Iraq.