

‘Murders After Murders’ by Soldiers, Villagers Tell Afghan Journalist

By [RNZ News](#)

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Afghanis who say they have witnessed torture and murder at the hands of Australian soldiers want the chance to testify in court as well as compensation, a journalist says.

Australia’s Defence Force Chief **Angus Campbell** [announced yesterday that there is information to substantiate](#) 23 incidents of alleged unlawful killing of 39 people by 25 special forces personnel in Afghanistan.

He was commenting on a four-year inquiry that found “credible information” supporting allegations of war crimes by the country’s special forces.

Major General Paul Brereton’s report also said junior soldiers were often required by their patrol commanders to shoot prisoners to get their first kill in a practice known as “bleeding”.

The inquiry also found evidence soldiers gloated about their actions, kept kill counts and planted phones and weapons on corpses to justify their actions.

Afghan journalist Bilal Sarwary has interviewed some of the victims’ families. Speaking from Kabul, he told *Morning Report*: “They told me about torture, about helicopters, about women and children getting scared and murder.”

One victim had told him four of his family had been killed – two brothers and two cousins.

In another village he spoke to a number of victims about their bad experiences and they described “murders after murders”.

“One man did say to me that he wanted to look up in the eyes of these killers and ask them why did they kill so many innocent Afghans.”

Another man he interviewed couldn’t stop crying as he likened the sound of bullets from a gun with a silencer to “drops of water”.

“These families... have been telling me that they want to get justice, that they want to make sure this is a transparent process and that those responsible are brought to justice.”

They have asked him if those directly affected will get the chance to fly to Australia to give

evidence in courtrooms there, Sarwary said.

Many of the people involved were very poor and they had also asked him about their chances of receiving compensation from Australia.

Sarwary said that the Afghanistan Human Rights Commission has demanded that Australia adopts a transparent process as it lays charges against the perpetrators and there should be compensation for victims.

‘We crossed a very bad line’ - ex-soldier

The Brereton inquiry heard from more than 400 witnesses, including former SAS paramedic **Dusty Miller**, who was deployed to Afghanistan in 2012.

He told the ABC he witnessed a number of unlawful killings and has since struggled with psychological wounds.

He said he felt vindicated after reading the report and is in no doubt that some of the soldiers need to go to jail for their crimes. It might be hard for the Australian public to accept such behaviour had occurred, he said.

“We’ve got this proud ANZAC tradition that we’re trying to uphold but unfortunately it’s like finding out that Santa Claus isn’t real.

“We crossed a very bad line and we crossed it for a number of years and we need to pay that price now.”

The report also warned that more killings will be revealed in the future and Miller said he is sure that is true.

Some soldiers’ lives had been ruined by what they had witnessed in Afghanistan. It also meant the end of his own military career, Miller said.

“Everybody knew what was going on. It was a day-to-day occurrence. We normalised it... you certainly had to go along with what was happening because the alternative would have been professional suicide. You’d have been ostracised. There was no way you would have flagged this with the commanders or speak up – that would have been unthinkable.”

Miller said the commanders must have known what was happening especially as they had debriefs after every mission, however, it was “a minority group” who acted badly and the majority of men he served with were “honourable” although they operated in a “dog eat dog” aggressive environment.

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