

Taliban Releases Video of American-Canadian Children Held in Captivity

Senior Taliban figures confirmed on Tuesday they had released a new video showing a kidnapped American-Canadian family, including two young boys born in captivity while held by the feared Haqqani network.

The video showed for the first time the two sons of Canadian Joshua Boyle and Caitlan Coleman, a U.S. citizen. Coleman, 31, was pregnant when the couple were abducted in 2012 inside Afghanistan while on a backpacking trip.

A Canadian spokesman said the government was reviewing the video, while U.S. officials would not immediately comment.

In the video, Coleman begs for an end to their “Kafkaesque nightmare” and is critical of both the American and Canadian governments and the family’s Haqqani captors.

“We understand both sides hate us and are content to leave us and our two surviving children in these problems,” she said.

“But we can only ask and pray that somebody will recognize the atrocities these men carry out against us as so-called retaliation in their ingratitude and hypocrisy.”

The two young boys—who, along with their parents, appeared healthy—fidgeted on their father’s lap as Coleman added: “My children have seen their mother defiled.”

Two senior Taliban figures based in Afghanistan told Reuters by telephone that the video had been uploaded by the radical Islamist insurgents, who are fighting to topple the government in Kabul.

One said the video came from the Haqqani network—a close affiliate of the Afghan Taliban—and it had been delivered to both U.S. and Canadian officials before being posted on YouTube late on Monday night.

He said the Haqqani network is demanding the release of three of its senior members—including the brother and maternal uncle of Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is deputy leader of the Afghan Taliban.

Coleman's reference to her two "surviving children" was unexplained. She appealed to both President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump to make a deal with their captors.

"They want money, power, friends. You must give them these things before progress can be made."

Michael O'Shaughnessy, spokesman for the Canadian Department of Global Affairs, said officials were studying the video.

"We are deeply concerned for the safety and well-being of Joshua Boyle, Caitlan Coleman and their young children and call for their unconditional release," he said.

U.S. officials declined to comment on the new video but referred reporters to statements made by State Department spokesman John Kirby after the last video of the couple released in late August.

In those statements, Kirby called for the family's "immediate release on humanitarian grounds" and said the U.S. would "continue to work aggressively" to bring all American hostages home. {eo}

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