

Afghan TV broadcasts murders

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AFGHAN television have broadcast what it said was exclusive footage of men murdered, some of them beheaded, in Pakistan because they were against the extremist Taliban and al-Qaeda movements.

The images broadcast on the evening news bulletin of private Tolo television station showed the decapitated heads of three men being held up in front of a crowd of onlookers.

They also showed several bodies being dragged behind a pick-up truck.

Tolo said the pictures were filmed in Pakistan's South Waziristan tribal district, which shares a border with southern areas of Afghanistan most affected by a deadly insurgency blamed in most part of Taliban militants.

The men were killed because they "allegedly opposed the presence of al-Qaeda and Taliban operators in South Waziristan", the television station said in a statement.

"The footage, obtained by Tolo TV exclusively, shows half a dozen dead bodies being dragged by a vehicle through the streets of Mandrakhel (in Waziristan), while a uniformed Pakistani military officer drives past without interfering," the statement said.

"In other scenes mutilated bodies and severed heads are placed on display in various positions and locations to dissuade others from opposing al-Qaeda/Taliban presence in the region."

"Crowds are heard chanting 'long live Osama bin Laden' and 'long live Mullah Omar'," it said. The men are respectively the leaders of al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

The television station did not say how it obtained the footage of the alleged incident, which it said occurred about a month ago.

The leadership of the ultra-conservative Islamic Taliban regime is believed to have fled from Afghanistan into neighbouring Pakistan after it was toppled in late 2001 in a US-led invasion.

The attack that ousted them was launched after the hardliners did not hand over Osama bin Laden, a staunch ally, wanted for the September 11 attacks.

During their nearly five-year hold of government, the Taliban imposed a harsh version of Islamic Sharia law which included chopping off hands for theft and public executions, with the bodies of the dead sometimes paraded in public.

Many believe the nearly four-year-old insurgency that sees almost daily attacks in Afghanistan, including beheadings, is directed from across the border in largely lawless, tribe-dominated areas of Pakistan, including Waziristan.

Pakistan has for about two years had thousands of troops in the area to root out militants, but some Afghan officials say more needs to be done to remove the extremists hobbling the country's attempts to rebuild.