

Thank you for your warm support and kindness you have shown the past few days. As you might imagine the family is going through a very hard time right now. We are mourning the loss of our son, brother and cousin, Jermaine, who was killed in an airstrike somewhere in the Caliphate (we don't know where). Although he was killed on Monday, the news only reached us on Thursday. Of course, we were devastated upon hearing it. His death has made us shed bitter tears. It has literally created an emptiness in our life that can never be filled again. Jermaine was 28 years old and leaves behind 3 children, and his wife is expecting a fourth child. The idea that his children will have to grow up without their father, that his son to be will never even know his father, breaks our hearts.

Of course we are well aware of the great moral and emotional ambiguities that surround his death. He has made some incomprehensible and morally abhorrent choices, deciding to join a group which represents everything which is evil in this world. Let this be entirely clear: we completely and utterly reject the choices that he and his wife made. The ideals that they chose to support and which my brother died for are evil and cannot under any circumstance be defended.

Although we are used to say 'nothing than good about the dead' we realize that in this particular case his death cannot be seen separately from the wrong moral choices he has made. This makes the mourning process ambiguous and complicated. We ourselves are struggling with some very complicated emotions which are hard to describe in words.

Yet we know that these choices are not everything that is to be said about him. We choose to remember him as the brother, son, cousin and father that he was. Jermaine was a good person. He was very social and used to have many friends. He was a workaholic that never wanted to rest or sit down and used to combine a full time job with studies and the care of his family. He was an exemplary father (at least until he decided to take his family to the Caliphate) whose kids were well raised. He was a caring and helpful guy that always stood ready to help his family and friends, even if he had to sacrifice a nights sleep for it. He firmly believed in the ideals he died for, believing he was fighting for a true and just cause.

We essentially see him as a tragic figure, a good, albeit somewhat naive person, who made a choice for evil. His example is a stark reminder to anyone on how a perverted and sick ideology can make normal people engage in behavior which is destructive to both themselves and their surroundings.

Fortunately, we have no reasons to believe he has committed war crimes or crimes against humanity during his stay in the Caliphate. Although we would have preferred to see him return alive, we prefer this scenario over one in which he would have taken the lives of innocent people. Although we have no clarity on what exactly he was doing in the Caliphate, it is very unlikely he engaged in fighting operations. This gives the family a degree of peace.

The chapter however, is still far from closed. His family still resides in the Caliphate. The top priority for the family is to get the children back. These children are the victims of the choices their parents made. They did not chose this, nor do they carry any responsibility. The only thing we can hope for is to embrace them again as soon as possible.

The complexity of the matter makes the mourning process anything but straightforward. There is no body, no grave and we do not know where he was killed. We can lay no flowers or engage in the rituals that help us to deal with his death. The moral and emotional ambiguities make the mourning process more complex than it should be.

We are strengthened by the many messages of support that have reached us the past few days. Although it will not help to change anything, it does the family a lot of good to see that many recognize our sorrow and express their support. For that we thank you.