

# THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

NADIA KABIR BARB

I have always been a Sci-fi fan and geek and a question that has crossed my mind on numerous occasions is whether there are any other life forms out there. Surely we cannot be the only sentient beings in this mind bogglingly vast array of galaxies. Thinking we are alone seems rather presumptuous.

Can you imagine if there are 'alien' life forms and they have been observing us for any given period of time, what conclusions they must have drawn from their observations? I dread to think. If I were them, I would turn my spaceship around before you could say "beam me up Scotty" and head off to any one of the countless other galaxies at warp speed. They would probably consider the inhabitants of planet Earth to be predominantly a violent, hate filled, bigoted and war mongering species.

You only need turn on the television, open your newspaper or even sign in to your social media of choice to be inundated with news of unspeakable brutality being perpetrated in every corner of the world by our fellow men.

Recently there was global outrage at the murders of three young Muslim students in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. You wonder what kind of world we live in when someone can walk into your home and murder you in cold blood by shooting you in the head execution style.

Deah Shaddy Barakat, his wife Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha and her younger sister Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha were found dead on Tuesday the 10th of



Deah Shaddy Barakat, Yusor Abu-Salha and Razan Abu-Salha at Razan's graduation.

PHOTO: COURTESY

February in their home near the University of North Carolina where Deah Barakat was a dental student. They were only 23, 21 and 19 years respectively.

In a statement after the murders, Chapel Hill Police said that a preliminary investigation suggested the crime was "motivated by an ongoing neighbour dispute over parking". However, both Deah Barakat's father Namee Barakat and Yusor and Razan Abu-Salha's father, Dr Mohammad Abu-Salha, felt that the shooting was based on the religion and culture of the victims. According to Dr Abu Salha, "This was not



Women take part in a vigil for three young Muslims killed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

PHOTO: AFP

a dispute over a parking space; this was a hate crime".

However, you look at it, the outcome remains the same --- the senseless deaths of three innocent people

We also live in a world where groups such as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) exist. Of recent, they have gained worldwide notoriety by their particularly barbaric acts of violence including the beheadings of civilians, soldiers, aid workers and journalists. They are also known for their web and social media presence considering they use YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram for propaganda purposes. They have

garnered global condemnation for disseminating videos of the beheadings they have carried out including that of the mass beheading of 21 Coptic Christian Egyptians. Earlier this year ISIS posted a sickening video showing Jordanian Air Force pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh being burnt alive. He is shown in a cage wearing an orange jumpsuit before he is set on fire.

We as a species seem to spend an inordinate amount of time, energy and money creating ways to injure, maim and kill one another. Why else would we be hell bent on trying to develop nuclear weapons which are considered weapons of mass destruction. To put things in perspective, according to The

Brookings Institute, an American centric think tank. The U.S. spent \$8.75 trillion on nuclear weapons programmes between 1940 and 1996.

When we are not trying to develop weapons capable of annihilating entire populations, we create human killing machines such as US Navy SEAL and sniper Chris Kyle. While serving on four tours in the Iraq war, he is known to have made 160 official kills. It is one thing to serve your country in times of war but distressing to imagine that anyone could find pleasure in taking a human life. In his autobiography, Chris Kyle wrote "I loved what I did. I still do". He also stated that "If circumstances were different—if my family didn't need me—I'd be back in a heartbeat. I'm not lying or exaggerating to say it was fun. I had the time of my life being a SEAL." The sad irony is that he himself was gunned down by an ex US Marine Eddie Ray Routh who was suffering from post-traumatic stress

disorder (PTSD).

If indeed our extra-terrestrial counterparts have been watching us, they would find us responsible for not just random isolated acts of violence but guilty of committing genocide over the centuries. We have the Holocaust, the Khmer Rouge and the Crusades to name a few.

If I were them I wouldn't touch us with an intergalactic barge pole. Is it a wonder that we still find ourselves alone...