

President Barack Obama
The Office of the President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

June 6, 2016

Dear President Obama,

As faith leaders, we feel called to express our continuing concern about the Administration's drone warfare program. Our faith traditions call us to recognize the goodness and inherent worth of people, and this program that arbitrarily and unaccountably takes human life runs counter to these values, and the values of many Americans.

In recent years, the U.S. lethal drones program has expanded rapidly with little accountability. In that light, we commend the Administration's recent plan to release a drones "playbook" and reports of combatant and noncombatant casualties caused by U.S. drone strikes. We urge the Administration to fully implement these promises of greater transparency as we raise specific concerns about the U.S. lethal drones program.

First and foremost, we are concerned by the thousands of intended and unintended deaths caused by U.S. drone warfare policy. These numbers are staggering, especially given the questionable legality of covert drone strikes.

Because drone strikes are often preemptive measures against potential threats, targets are often presumed guilty with little or no evidence. The assumption of guilt not only ignores due process, but also strikes targets with total lethality, ignoring protections guaranteed by international human and civil rights law. Drone strikes result in the death penalty for every alleged crime, even when arrest, prosecution, and appropriate punishments could easily be pursued.

In addition, the false claim that drones are precise weapons misrepresents the large number of innocent civilian casualties, including numerous children, caused by drone strikes. God weeps and our hearts ache at such unnecessary loss of human life.

Beyond the immense loss of human life, we are also troubled by the secrecy surrounding the U.S. drones warfare program. As our nation seeks to model democracy for the world, the lack of transparency regarding drone strikes stifles the ability of citizens or legislators to fully judge and understand the impact of lethal drone technology.

Releasing the Administration's reports is a necessary step to improve transparency and promote accountability, but this must be accompanied by an honest reflection on the efficacy of lethal drone strikes.

Lethal drone strikes place the U.S. in a perpetual state of covert war that reduces national and international security more than it helps. The massive loss of innocent lives generates opposition to U.S. power, fuels recruitment for extremist groups and makes us less safe. Alternatives through including cooperation with international partners on diplomacy, development, promotion

of human rights, intelligence sharing, and international policing could address the root causes of extremism without being counterproductive to sustainable resolution of conflict.

While we oppose the Administration's expansion of the U.S. drone warfare program, the recent promise to disclose information on drones gives us hope. In addition to releasing these reports, we urge the Obama Administration to halt the drone warfare program during its final months in office. While a halt in drone warfare cannot reverse the loss of innocent lives, this step can honor their loss, lessen recruitment by terrorist groups, and increase the chance that future administrations will operate with greater accountability and transparency.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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