



INTERFAITH NETWORK ON DRONE WARFARE

Why Many in the Faith Community are Concerned about Drone Warfare

There are many in the faith community who are concerned about lethal drones. Ten denominations and faith groups (<https://www.interfaithdronenetwork.org/about/faith-group-statements.html>) have called for lethal drones to be banned or limited, so drone warfare is viewed by many in the faith community as an important moral and spiritual issue. Similarly, many in the faith community have advocated that land mines and cluster bombs be banned.

Below are some reasons why it has been suggested that lethal drones should be banned or limited:

1. Because lethal drones are easy to use, very mobile, and can be used without putting American troops at direct physical risk, it is easy to expand warfare into countries where Congress has not declared war. This increases the likelihood that the U.S. will conduct warfare, often covert, in more and more conflicts.

The Constitution is clear that ONLY Congress can declare war. Recent Administrations have used lethal drones without first obtaining specific Congressional approval. The United States has used lethal drones in countries where Congress has not declared war and in situations not covered by the 2001 or 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force. Many drone strikes may violate international law.

2. Though suspected or confirmed terrorists may be killed or wounded with lethal drones, drones cannot kill an extremist movement. In fact, the opposite is likely – drone attacks increase the determination of terrorists and increase the number of extremists. As a common expression goes, “Kill a terrorist; create ten more.” Drones do not kill violent ideology, but instead generate hatred and mistrust of America.
3. Lethal drones are not as nearly as precise as the government claims, and they still must rely on accurate intelligence. Many civilians have been killed by drones, and it is not always clear why. Estimates from reliable sources estimate that between 12 and 35% of casualties are civilians.
4. The U.S. government is not transparent about the number or identity of people killed by its lethal drones, so the American public does not know how many targets and civilians have been killed by drone strikes. In some cases, the government does not know who it is targeting.
5. Drones are proliferating. More than 80 countries currently have lethal drones. It is increasingly likely that lethal drones will be used against the U.S. The world urgently needs strong international agreement banning or limiting the use of lethal drones.
6. The use of drones is not transparent. The U.S. government has kept much of this program secret. There is a disconnect between what Americans know and what the government is doing. It is difficult for Americans to publicly debate drone warfare because they have inadequate information. The few times that information has been made public because of litigation, policies governing the use of drone warfare have been changed. Transparency about the use of lethal force is essential to assessing the lawfulness of military operations and providing redress for victims.

Both the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) use lethal drones. The CIA does not disclose information about their use of drones. Some have advocated for the CIA to be prohibited from using drones and only the DOD to be able to use them.

7. While the U.S. made extensive use of drones to carry out strikes (often questionably legal ones) prior to the Trump Administration, President Trump has been reported to have dramatically increased the number of drone strikes and increased the number of civilians killed by strikes. Though these policy changes have not been officially confirmed, they are reported to include:
 - Allowing lethal targeting of individuals outside of armed conflict zones who do not pose an imminent threat, in violation of international law.
 - Relaxing the “near certainty” standard that an identified target is present at the time of the strike, increasing risk to civilians.
 - Giving the CIA and U.S. military authority to carry out drone strikes without prior approval from the White House.
8. As the United States has continued using lethal drones, terrorist groups (like ISIS) have started using them.
9. Though drone operators cannot be killed or wounded, they are often damaged psychologically and many have been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Consequently, it has become difficult to recruit and retain enough drone operators.
10. Drone warfare has not ended terrorism and there are now more terrorists. Unless drone warfare is banned or restricted, drones are highly likely to be used against the United States and put our citizens at risk. Many people of faith share common values which compel faith communities to work for the common good of all people through the principles of love, mercy, just peace, solidarity, human dignity, restorative justice and reconciliation. Drone warfare negates these values.

The Washington-based Interfaith Working Group on Drone Warfare, with which INDW partners, is making three recommendations to the U.S. government

- **Study the long-term impacts of drone warfare.** The U.S. should carry out a thorough study of how drone strikes have impacted communities, national stability of affected countries, U.S. national security, and other U.S. interests. Special attention should be paid to how drone strikes have impacted social cohesion, family structures, legitimacy of the various national governments, and communities’ perception of the United States and other international actors.
- **End the CIA’s authority to carry out drone strikes.** CIA drone strikes are largely carried out in secret with little accountability and without justice for affected civilians. The CIA carries out strikes in at least four countries, and the CIA’s program of lethal drone strikes has lasted through three Administrations. It is in effect a secret war - one never specifically authorized by Congress or formally acknowledged to the American public.
- **Maintain meaningful human control over lethal weapons.** The United States must commit to not develop Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), which would be able to autonomously target and kill. The government should also encourage international institutions to ban LAWS, and ensure that there is meaningful human control over and responsibility for all lethal strikes.

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