

## Why I Support a Treaty to Ban Weaponized & Surveillance Drones

By Jack Gilroy

***This statement was written for the website “Ban Killer Drones”, to be launched in March, 2021 to promote the creation of an international treaty to ban weaponized drones and drone surveillance.***

I remember well where I was on October 1, 2014. I was handcuffed tighter than I had ever been, wiggling my fingers to keep my hands from going numb. I had been stuffed prostrate between the front and rear seat of an Onondaga Sheriff's Department car in Syracuse, NY. Judge Robert Jokl had just sent me on my way to Jamesville Penitentiary to begin a three month sentence for my participation in a die-in at the main gate of the United States Air Force 174th Attack Wing at Hancock Killer drone base. Lying on the floor, squeezed between the seats, I asked the two deputies to give me room to sit. The deputy in the passenger seat called out: "You'll be at the jail in just 15 minutes or so, live with it."

I lived with it, but I'm still mad as hell that my U.S. government continues to assassinate "suspected terrorists". It's time to promote a treaty to ban weaponized and surveillance drones world wide.

Drones are part of our 21st century culture. Drones are unmanned aerial vehicles, UAVs. UAVs have much that are praiseworthy. UAVs are useful for weather forecasting, agricultural studies, mapping, sports and recreation. They are here to stay.

Weaponized drones have nothing that is praiseworthy. Weaponized drones are unmanned weapons carriers used to assassinate people in foreign (for now) lands. The use of weaponized drones are immoral, illegal, racist, (used mainly to kill people of color) and pragmatically stupid. No other nation does what the United States does frequently---assassinate with weaponized drones in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Libya. The United States is still the greatest [purveyor of violence](#) in the world and killer drones have become our deadly calling card.

As a nation that claims great moral principles such as freedom, justice, equality—few acts contradict this assumption more than killing people who have not been arrested, have not been charged, have not had legal representation, have not been on trial. Yet the U.S. government kills them outside of any judicial proceedings—killings known as “extra-judicial” and condemned by leading United States constitutional and international lawyers.

Bill Quigley, a Loyola University professor of constitutional law has defended protestors arrested for nonviolent actions. At the same time, he is raising awareness of our immoral and [illegal acts](#) of killing suspected “terrorists” by weaponized drones— the dead and wounded almost always including innocent civilians. Quigley says “these killings would be criminal acts if they occurred in the United States. Does it make any legal sense that these killings would be legal outside of the United States”?

The United States signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1988. Ironically, we break that treaty each time we kill a suspected terrorist—and of course those not suspected but happen to be in the proximity of those targeted killings by United States drones. We justify this contradiction through the passage of the [Authorization to Use Military Force Act](#). It was passed by Congress and signed by President George W Bush on September 18th, 2001. The AMUF has given the President of the United States the authority to kill people anywhere in the world if they are suspects. The AUMF is the piece of legislation that gave “authority” to do Shock and Awe, tear Iraq and Afghanistan to pieces and wreak havoc all over the Middle East.

Americans have been living with their nation’s drone assassination program since the passage of the AUMF days after 9/11. THE AUMF is a disastrous congressional act—perhaps the worst piece of legislation ever—passed without debate: The AUMF has been the keystone congressional act that has allowed and promoted our never ending wars for over 20 year’s. The Pentagon loves it. The military-industrial complex love it. Preparing for war and actual war is what they do. It’s time to bring debate to the House and Senate floors. The AUMF needs to be rescinded.

American drone pilots and crew are known to even fire at those who come to aid the wounded. The jargon for killing good Samaritans and emergency workers in some far off land is "double tap". The jargon for those they kill is “splat”.

In 2013, [The Intercept](#) obtained secret documents testifying to the fact that thousands of people have been killed — 90 % of them civilians. *The Intercept* knowing no U.S. government official ever admitted to this truth, released the documents to the public. The nervous criminal element in the U.S. government immediately went to work to indict the truth teller who leaked the truth to the investigative journal. The alleged whistle blower, Daniel Evette Hale, was indicted on May 9, 2020 for releasing the documents to *The Intercept*. His trial is set for March of 2021 and he faces 50 years in prison.

Meanwhile, no United States government worker involved or directly responsible for the deaths of thousands of people has been indicted.

It’s time for the United States Department of Justice to end the shell game covering United States criminal acts. It’s time to expose the criminality of our drone policy and end it all—no mothballing Predators and Reapers nor Hellfire Missiles, BGU -12 bombs. These weapons of death need to be recycled into items that assist people to live. We have the skills, the will and the people of compassion to do that.

An update (2020) by the [Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#) reports that they have tracked over 14,000 drone strikes and up to 16,000 people killed by U.S. drones. Most drone victims remain nameless even to congressional oversight committees studying weaponized drones.

Emranin Feroz, writing for foreign policy magazine,, December 17, 2020 tells of meeting a tall Afghan man, Aluzi, who reminded him of the actor Sean Connery ...Aluzi told of how his brother, Kameen, on his way to town (Kabul) to get watermelons to sell was killed by a U.S. drone. "Nothing was left of him. Even most of his bones were gone," recalled Aluzi. Aluzi introduced the author, Feroz, to village children who told how they could recognize the sound of helicopters and fighter jets and would not come outside if drones were whirling overhead. ["We are all traumatized"](#) he said.

Take a few seconds, as I have, to imagine that you are a farmer in Afghanistan and you've been hearing the sound of overhead UAVs all day and all night long. You are a man with a wife and four children. It's September, time in Afghanistan to harvest pine nuts. You join a group of men hired to pick the nuts that are many miles away in Nagsganhar. The long drive standing in the back of a pickup truck is not a problem for you since the pay is good and you'll be back home in a few weeks with money for survival in the coming long winter.

The first week is cloudy and rainy but not a problem. The workers are all family men and happy to be working and telling family stories. You talk each night around the fire and speak of the overhead sound of drones. All of you know it's an American killer drone. You joke about why you simple farmers would be a target. One of the men says cloudy days are best since drone cameras can't see people on the ground.

A young worker tells you of a poem by a Pakistani child, Zur and his sister, Nabella, who were victims of a drone attack. They survived with serious wounds. Other family and friends died. The man recites Zur's words: "I no longer love blue skies. In fact, I now prefer gray skies. The drones do not fly when the skies are gray. When the sky brightens, drones return and we live in fear."

The following day you awake to a blue sky and can see the drone overhead. But you do not worry for you were just pine nut pickers. But that evening as you sit around a campfire, a missile hits your work camp. More than 30 are killed. Your wounds were slight but other men were taken away to hospitals. The Americans must have believed you were terrorists. You feel intense anger and vow revenge on the Americans.

My imagination of the Afghan man is not difficult to suppose. A drone strike of pine pickers in Afghanistan on September 19, 2019 did take place and more than 30 people died. It was little reported in western journals with no rage from the anesthetized American public. We're been taught by parents, school teachers, ministers, priests, rabbis, bishops, and cardinals that our government cares for us and wants to make us secure. Many Americans pray for the troops to do their job—and

hope someday all killing of foreign people will not require American boys (and girls) to sacrifice themselves on foreign soil. Unfortunately, what most Americans do not realize is killer drones have not ever and are not now making the world more secure. They make bitter enemies around the world and create insecurity as they sow [hate](#) and vengeance.

It's important to note that President Biden ended his inauguration speech with "May God bless America and God protect our troops." That is where we are at: praising America and beseeching God to protect our troops. The arms industry and the religious arm of the military-industrial complex must be smiling

It's time to work to create an International Treaty to ban weaponized drones and rescind AUMF.

I encourage my readers to join the movement to establish an international ban on weaponized and surveillance drones at [www.knowdrones.org](http://www.knowdrones.org) In addition, we should encourage the new President of the United States to end weaponized drones and surveillance drones.

President Joe Biden must be pressed to end the legacy of drone killings by the administrations of Bush, Obama and Trump. He needs to take the initiative. Biden can do that by signing the United States to an International Treaty to Ban Weaponized Drones and to rescind the Authority to Use Military Force Act.

Call Joe Biden and leave a comment about the need to end killer drones, rescind the AUMF and use diplomacy, not death threats or death dealing missiles and bombs Call President Biden at:

Call President Biden at:

202 456 1111

Or email him by going to <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

Or send him a postcard. They are read and recorded. (letters are suspect—what's in the envelope?). A one or two liner to end our killer drone policy and the AUMF will work.

The President

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