

## **Mark Colville's Sentencing Statement, 12-3-14**

Judge Jokl:

I am standing here before you tonight because I tried to intervene on behalf of a family in Afghanistan whose members have experienced the unspeakable trauma of witnessing loved ones being blown to pieces, murdered by hellfire missiles fired from remote control aircraft like those flown from the 174th Attack Wing at Hancock Airbase. I stand here, under judgment in this court, because a member of that family, Raz Mohammad, wrote an urgent plea to the courts of the United States, to our government and military, to stop these unprovoked attacks on his people, and I made a conscientious decision to carry Mr. Mohammad's plea to the gates of Hancock. Make no mistake: I am proud of that decision. As a husband and father myself, and as a child of God, I do not hesitate to affirm that the actions for which I stand subject to punishment in this court tonight were responsible, loving and nonviolent. As such, no sentence that you pronounce here can either condemn me or delegitimize what I've done, nor will it have any impact on the truth of similar actions undertaken by dozens of others who are still awaiting trial in this court.

The drone base within your jurisdiction is part of a military/intelligence undertaking that is not only founded upon criminality, but is also, by any sober analysis, allowed to operate beyond the reach of law. Extrajudicial killings, targeted assassinations, acts of state terrorism, the deliberate targeting of civilians- all of these crimes form the essence of the weaponized drone program that the United States government claims to be legal in its prosecution of the so called "war on terror". Recent studies have shown that for every targeted person killed in a drone strike, twenty eight people of undetermined identity have also been slaughtered. The military admits to employing a mode of operation called "double-tapping", in which a weaponized drone is directed back to strike a target a second time, after first responders have arrived to help the wounded.

Yet never has any of this been subject to congressional approval or, more importantly, to the scrutiny of U.S. courts. In this case, you had the opportunity, from where you sit, to change that. You've heard the testimony of several trials similar to mine; you know what the reality is. You also heard the desperate plea of Raz Mohammad, which was read in open court during this trial. What you chose was to further legitimize these crimes by ignoring them. The faces of dead children, murdered by our nation's hand, had no place in this court. They were excluded, Objected to, Irrelevant. Until that changes, this court continues to take an active, crucial role in condemning the innocent to death. In so doing, this court condemns itself.

And I think it's fitting to end with the words of Raz that were sent to me this afternoon on behalf of his sister, widowed after a drone attack killed her young husband:

*"My sister says that for the sake of her 7 year old son, she doesn't want to bear any grudges or take revenge against the U.S./NATO forces for the drone attack that killed his father. But, she asks that the U.S./NATO forces end their drone attacks in Afghanistan, and that they give an open account of deaths cause by drone attacks in this country."*

—