

Open Letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel

On Ramstein: An Open Letter From US Citizens to German Chancellor Angela Merkel

authored by Elsa Rassbach, Judy Bello, Nick Mottern, Ray McGovern

reprinted from [Truthout.org Speakout](http://Truthout.org/Speakout)

The letter was written and endorsed by Americans who stand in solidarity with the Yemeni survivors of drone strike victims on behalf of their murdered loved ones. Faisal bin Ali Jaber, the first complainant on the suit, has previously met with members of Congress in the United States, but received no satisfactory response. We further stand in solidarity with the German people who should not be made to host a U.S. center of warmaking and facilitate the illegal murderous U.S. military drone program.

[The Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars](#), the [Syracuse Peace Council](#) and [Rochester Peace Action and Education](#) are among the endorsers of the letter, which has been signed by Judy Bello and Carol Baum on our behalf.

May 26, 2015

Her Excellency Dr. Angela Merkel
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany
Bundeskanzleramt
Willy-Brandt-Straße 1
10557 Berlin, Germany

Dear Chancellor Merkel:

On May 27th a German court in Cologne will hear evidence from Faisal bin Ali Jaber, an environmental engineer from Yemen who lost two relatives to a 2012 U.S. drone strike. This is the

first time that a court in a country providing significant military/technical support for the U.S. drone program has permitted such a case to be heard.

U.S. drone strikes have killed or maimed tens of thousands in many countries with which the U.S. is not officially at war. The vast majority of drone-strike victims have been innocent bystanders, including large numbers of children. One respected study found that for every target or known combatant killed, 28 "unknown persons" were also killed. Because the victims were/are not U.S. citizens, their families do not have standing to initiate legal action in U.S. courts. Shamefully, the families of these victims have had no legal recourse whatsoever.

Thus the case of Mr. bin Ali Jaber, representing his family in a German court, is of great interest to many who have long been dismayed at the U.S. government's violations of human rights and international law in the so-called "war on terror." Reportedly, Mr. bin Ali Jaber will argue that the German Government has violated the German Constitution by allowing the U.S. to use Ramstein Air Base in Germany for extrajudicial "targeted" killings in Yemen. He is expected to request that the German government "take legal and political responsibility for the U.S. drone war in Yemen" and "forbid use of the Satellite Relay Station in Ramstein."

Credible evidence has already been widely published indicating that the U.S. Satellite Relay Station in Ramstein plays an essential role in ALL U.S. drone strikes in the Middle East, Africa, and Southwest Asia. The killings and maiming resulting from missiles fired from U.S. drones would not be possible without the cooperation of the German government in enabling the U.S. to use Ramstein Air Base for the illegal drone wars – a military base which, we respectfully suggest, is an anachronism a full seventy years after the liberation of Germany and Europe from the Nazis.

Irrespective of the ultimate outcome in court of Mr. bin Ali Jaber's case, which possibly could continue for years, now is the time for Germany to take effective measures to stop the U.S. from using Ramstein Air Base for combat drone missions.

The reality is this: The military base in Ramstein is under the legal jurisdiction of the Federal Government of Germany, even though the U.S. Air Force has been allowed to use the base. If illegal activities such as extrajudicial killings are conducted from Ramstein or other U.S. bases in Germany – and if U.S. authorities do not desist from these legal offenses then we respectfully suggest that you and your government have a duty under international law to act. This is clearly expressed in the Nuremberg Trials Federal Rules Decisions of 1946-47 (6 F.R.D.60), which were adopted into US law. Accordingly, every individual participating in the enactment of a war crime is responsible for that crime, including businessmen, politicians and others who enable the criminal act.

In 1991 the reunited Federal Republic of Germany was granted "complete sovereignty at home and abroad" via the Two-plus-Four-Treaty. The Treaty emphasizes that "there shall be only peaceful activities from German territory" as does Article 26 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, which states that the acts undertaken to prepare for a war of aggression are deemed "unconstitutional" and "a criminal offense." Many in the U.S. and around the world hope that the German people and their government will provide much-needed leadership in the world on behalf of peace and of human rights.

The German Government often states that it has no knowledge of the activities being conducted at Ramstein Air Base or other U.S. bases in Germany. We respectfully submit that if this is the case, you and the German Government may have a duty to

require the needed transparency and accountability from the U.S. military and intelligence agencies in Germany. If the present Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the U.S. and Germany precludes the transparency and accountability that the German Government needs in order to enforce German and international law, then the German Government must request that the U.S. make appropriate modifications in the SOFA. As you know, Germany and the U.S. each have the right to unilaterally terminate the SOFA upon giving two years' notice. Many in the U.S. would not oppose but would indeed welcome a renegotiation of the SOFA between the U.S. and Germany if this should be required to restore the rule of law.

The end of hostilities in 1945 seventy years ago saw the world faced with the task of restoring and advancing the international rule of law. This led to efforts to define and punish war crimes – major efforts like the Nuremberg Tribunal and the formation of the United Nations, which in 1948 proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While Germany has sought to adhere to the principles of the Declaration, the U.S. increasingly in recent years ignored these principles. In addition, the U.S. seeks to draw NATO and other allies into complicity in violating these principles.

The U.S. began the drone program in secrecy in 2001 and did not reveal it to the American people or to most of their representatives in Congress; the drone program was first discovered and revealed by U.S. peace activists in 2008. The British people were also not informed when the United Kingdom in 2007 obtained killer drones from the U.S. And only recently have the German people been informed, through courageous reporting by independent journalists and whistleblowers, of the key role of Ramstein in the illegal U.S. drone program.

Now aware of the role Ramstein in undermining human rights and international law, many German citizens are calling upon you and the German government to enforce the rule of law in Germany, including on the U.S. bases. And because of the

indispensable role of Ramstein for all the U.S. drone strikes, the government of Germany now holds in its hands the power to actually stop the illegal U.S. drone killings altogether.

If the German Government were to take decisive action in this matter, Germany would surely find support among nations of the world, including the nations of Europe. The European Parliament in its Resolution on the Use of Armed Drones, which was adopted by a landslide vote of 534 to 49 on February 27, 2014, urged its Member States to “oppose and ban the practice of extrajudicial killings” and “not perpetrate unlawful targeted killings or facilitate such killings by other states.” The European Parliament Resolution further declares that Member States must “commit to ensuring that, where there are reasonable grounds for believing that an individual or entity within their jurisdiction may be connected to an unlawful targeted killing abroad, measures are taken in accordance with their domestic and legal obligations.”

Extrajudicial killing – the killing of ‘suspects’ – is in fact also a grievous violation of the U.S. Constitution. And the U.S. initiation and prosecution of killings and wars in sovereign countries that do not threaten the U.S. mainland violate international treaties the U.S. has signed and Congress has ratified, including the United Nations Charter.

Tens of thousands of Americans have struggled in vain for years to expose and end the U.S. drone program and other U.S. war crimes that have quite predictably led to increasing hatred for the U.S. and its allies among the targeted and terrorized populations. Like the incarceration without due process at Guantanamo, drone warfare has clearly undermined the post-WWII international law upon which we all rely.

We hope that major U.S. allies – and particularly Germany, because of the indispensable role it plays – will take firm action to end extrajudicial drone killings. We implore you to

take all steps necessary to put a stop to all activities in Germany that support drone warfare and killings by the U.S. government.

Signed:

- Carol Baum, Co-Founder of Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars, Syracuse Peace Council
- Judy Bello, Co-Founder of Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars, United National Antiwar Coalition
- Medea Benjamin, Co-Founder of CodePink
- Jacqueline Cabasso, National Co-convener, United for Peace and Justice
- Leah Bolger, Former President of National Veterans for Peace
- David Hartsough, PeaceWorkers, Fellowship of Reconciliation
- Robin Hensel, Little Falls OCCU-PIE
- Kathy Kelly, Voices for Creative Nonviolence
- Malachy Kilbride, National Coalition for Nonviolent Resistance
- Marilyn Levin, Co-Founder of United National Antiwar Coalition, United for Justice with Peace
- Mickie Lynn, Women Against War
- Ray McGovern, Retired CIA Analyst, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity
- Nick Mottern, KnowDrones
- Gael Murphy, CodePink
- Elsa Rassbach, CodePink, United National Antiwar Coalition
- Alyssa Rohricht, Graduate Student in International Relations
- Coleen Rowley, Retired FBI Agent, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity
- David Swanson, World Beyond War, War is a Crime
- Debra Sweet, Director of World Can't Wait

- Brian Terrell, Voices for Creative Nonviolence, Missouri Catholic Worker
- Colonel Ann Wright, Retired Military Officer and Diplomatic Attaché, Veterans for Peace, Code Pink

Endorsed by:

- Brandywine Peace Community, Philadelphia, PA
- CodePink Women for Peace
- Ithaca Catholic Worker, Ithaca, NY
- Know Drones
- Little Falls OCC-U-PIE, WI
- National Coalition for Nonviolent Resistance (NCNR)
- Peace Action and Education, Rochester, NY
- Syracuse Peace Council, Syracuse, NY
- United For Justice with Peace, Boston, MA
- United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC)
- U.S. Foreign Policy Activist Cooperative, Washington DC
- Upstate (NY) Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars
- Veterans For Peace, Chapter 27
- Voices for Creative Nonviolence
- War Is A Crime
- Watertown Citizens for Peace Justice and the Environment, Watertown, MA
- Wisconsin Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars
- Women Against Military Madness, Minneapolis, MN
- Women Against War, Albany, NY
- World Beyond War
- World Can't Wait

Afterward:

The Yemeni plaintiffs did not prevail on May 27, nor was it anticipated that they would prevail in such an important matter in a lower court in Germany. Nevertheless, the Court's decision in the case set some important legal precedents:

a) The Court ruled that the Yemeni survivors, who are not German citizens, have standing to sue the German government in the German courts. This is the first known time that a NATO country that has granted drone survivors or victims who are not citizens of their country such standing in court.

b) The Court stated in its decision that the media reports regarding the essential role of Ramstein in the US drone killings are “plausible,” the first time that this has been officially acknowledged by authorities Germany.

But the Court held that it is in the discretion of the German government to decide what steps must be taken to protect the people of Yemen from the danger of being killed by drones with essential assistance from Ramstein Air Base. In addition, the Court mentioned that the present Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the US and Germany may at this time prohibit the German government from closing the Satellite Relay Station in the Ramstein base. The plaintiffs argued that the SOFA could be renegotiated or even cancelled by the German government.

In an unusual step, the Court immediately granted the plaintiffs the right to appeal. [ECCHR](#) and [Reprive](#) will appeal on behalf of the Yemeni plaintiffs as soon as the full written decision of the court in Cologne is available.

**Ithaca Vigil in Support of
the call to close the**

Ramstein US Drone Base



Today at the Ithaca Catholic Worker Peace Vigil we held signs in support of the call to close the Ramstein US Drone Base in Germany.

As we stood on the corner with our signs many traveling by honked at us in support and gave us the thumbs up.

Tom Joyce of Ithaca said , *"I'm here today because I want to show my support for the German people's call to close the US base on Germany"*.

And James Ricks, also from Ithaca, stated, *"I feel strongly that we should let the Faisal bin Ali Jaber family, who have had two family members killed in US drone strikes in Yemen, know of our support for their lawsuit in Germany"*.

The lawsuit states that the German Government has violated its own Constitution by allowing the U.S. to use Ramstein Air Base in Germany for extrajudicial "targeted" killings in Yemen. It also requests that the German government take legal and political responsibility for the U.S. drone war in Yemen and forbid use of the Satellite Relay Station in Ramstein.



The Ramstein Base, one of the largest U.S. military bases outside the U.S., is the site of a satellite relay station that plays a key role in the communication between drone operators here in the U.S. and their drones abroad. The



importance of the Ramstein base to the U.S. drone war program cannot be overstated. Signals from drone operators in the U.S. are sent via transatlantic fiber optic cable to Ramstein, where the signal is bounced to a satellite that connects to drones in the Middle East and Africa.

German peace groups have asked citizens in the US for solidarity actions to Stoppt den US-Drohnen-Krieg via Ramstein (Stop U.S. Drone Warfare Via Ramstein). Our vigil today was timed to support a lawsuit filed by Reprieve and the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights against the German government on behalf of the bin Ali Jaber family. The case will begin with a hearing on May 27 before the high administrative court in Cologne, Germany.

For more information see [“Germany is the Tell-Tale Heart of America’s Drone War”](#) by Jeremy Scahill and an [interview](#) with Andreas Schuller, the lead attorney on the case.

Ground the Drones and End the Wars

Hancock Solidarity Vigil to Close the US Drone Base in Germany, Ramstein



Syracuse Peace Council members protest Ramstein relay in solidarity with the German people

Report Back From: **Carol Baum** of the *Syracuse Peace Council* and the *Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars*

Just wanted to let you know that today (May 21) we held a solidarity vigil to close the US Drone Base in Germany, Ramstein. We stood outside Hancock Air Base (in Syracuse), getting some (but not a lot of) media attention, but we did get a lot of car honks of support (but not from the cars coming out of the base).

If you haven't planned one yet, please consider it – we need to stand in solidarity with the German activists trying to get Ramstein closed down. Please note – our translation of “Stop the Global Drone War” probably should have been *Stoppt den US-Drohnen-Krieg via Ramstein* (this is the slogan being used in Germany, but we found out about it too late).

———— Press Release ————

Solidarity Vigil to Close Ramstein: US Drone

Base in Germany

Thursday, May 21 from 4:15-5:15 pm

On Thursday, May 21 from 4:15-5:15 pm, the Syracuse Peace Council is sponsoring a vigil to close Ramstein, a US military base in Germany. The vigil, which is part of our weekly Peace Outreaches, will be across the street from the main entrance of Hancock Air Base at 6001 E. Molloy Rd., Mattydale.

Ramstein Base, one of the largest U.S. military bases outside the U.S., is the site of a satellite relay station that plays a key role in the communication between drone operators here in the U.S. and their drones abroad. The importance of the Ramstein base to the U.S. drone war program cannot be overstated. Signals from drone operators in the U.S. are sent via transatlantic fiber optic cable to Ramstein, where the signal is bounced to a satellite that connects to drones in the Middle East and Africa.

German peace groups have put out a call to U.S. peace groups for solidarity actions to Stoppt den US-Drohnen-Krieg via Ramstein (Stop U.S. Drone Warfare Via Ramstein). This vigil is timed to support a lawsuit filed by Reprieve and the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights against the German government on behalf of the bin Ali Jaber family, who lost two members to a drone strike in Yemen. The case will begin with a hearing on May 27 before the high administrative court in Cologne, Germany. The suit demands that the German government “take legal and political responsibility for the U.S. drone was in Yemen” and “forbid use of the Satellite Relay Station in Ramstein.”

For more information see [“Germany is the Tell-Tale Heart of America’s Drone War”](#) by Jeremy Scahill and an [interview](#) with Andreas Schuller, the lead attorney on the case.

Mother Earth is Weeping for Her Children

**Mother Earth is Weeping for her Children:
The US Military Must Stop Environmental Ecocide**

Guest Post by Joy First of NCNR

As I traveled to DC to risk arrest in an action organized by the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance (NCNR) I was feeling both nervous, but also knowing this is what I needed to be doing. This would be my first arrest since I was arrested at the CIA in June 2013, and served a one-year probation sentence after an October 2013 trial. Taking almost two years off from risking arrest helped me to really examine what I was doing and why, and I was committed to continuing to live a life in resistance to the crimes of our government.

I have been a part of NCNR for 12 years – since the run-up to the war in Iraq in 2003. As the number of people involved in the anti-war movement declines, I know that we must keep up the resistance. Though we don't have big numbers now, it is more important than ever that we speak the truth about what is happening in the wars in Iraq, Pakistan, and Yemen, in the drone warfare program, and in looking at ways in which the climate crisis is exacerbated by the military.

There are so many ways in which the military is destroying our planet through the use of fossil fuels, nuclear weapons, depleted uranium, spraying poisonous chemicals on fields in the "War on Drugs" in South America, and through the several hundred military bases around the world. Agent Orange, used during the Vietnam War is still affecting the environment. According to Joseph Nevins, in an article published by

CommonDreams.org, [Greenwashing the Pentagon](#), "The U.S. military is the world's single biggest consumer of fossil fuels, and the single entity most responsible for destabilizing the Earth's climate."

WE MUST TAKE ACTION TO END THIS DESTRUCTION OF OUR ENVIRONMENT BY THE U.S. MILITARY.

NCNR began planning an Earth Day action several months ago where we hold the military accountable for their role in the destruction of the planet. I was sending quite a few emails to various individuals and lists as we continued our planning. Then about 6 weeks ago I was contacted by Elliot Grollman from the Department of Homeland Security. He wondered what we were doing, and as a way to try and get more information from me, he asked if he could help facilitate our action on April 22. What was very surprising to me was that he told me he knew about our action by reading my private email correspondence. We cannot ever think that anything we say will not be monitored. He called my home phone number in Mount Horeb, WI at 7:00 am on the morning of the action. Of course I was in Washington, DC and my husband told him that and gave him my cell phone number.

On Earth Day, April 22, I joined other activists to deliver a letter to Gina McCarthy, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, calling on the EPA to do their job in monitoring and bringing an end to the military's complicity in causing climate chaos, and then we went to the Pentagon where we would try to deliver a letter to the Secretary of Defense. Both of these letters were mailed several weeks before the action and we never received a response. In both of these letters we asked for a meeting to discuss our concerns.

About thirty people gathered outside the EPA at 10:00 am on the day of the action. David Barrows made a large banner that read "EPA – Do Your Job; Pentagon – Stop Your Ecocide". There was a picture of the earth in flames on the banner. We

also had 8 smaller posters with quotes from our letter to Ashton Carter.

Max started the program and talked about Mother Earth weeping as she was being destroyed by her children. Beth Adams read a statement, followed by Ed Kinane reading a statement by environmentalist Pat Hynes.

We had the letter we wanted to deliver to the head of the EPA, Gina McCarthy, or to a representative in a policy-making position. Instead the EPA sent someone from their Public Relations office out to receive our letter. They said they would get back to us, and I will be surprised if they do.

Marsha Coleman-Adebayo then spoke. Marsha had been an employee of the EPA until she blew the whistle on activities they were part of that were killing people. When she spoke up they told her to keep silent. But Marsha talked about how she would see people like us outside the window protesting against the EPA. Those protestors gave her courage to continue to push for an end to the crimes being committed by the EPA, even though she was fired. Marsha told us that by us being outside the EPA, we were offering inspiration to people who wanted to speak up, but were feeling scared to do so.

We had more work to do and so we left the EPA and took the Metro to the Pentagon City mall food court where we had a final briefing before heading over to the Pentagon.

We had about fifty people processing to the Pentagon with people holding puppets made by Sue Frankel-Streit taking the lead.

As we approached the Pentagon I could feel the butterflies in my stomach and my legs were feeling like they were turning to jelly. But I was with a group of people who I knew and trusted and I knew that I needed to be a part of this action.

We entered the Pentagon reservation and walked on the sidewalk

towards the Pentagon. At least 30 officers waiting for us. There was a metal fence along the sidewalk with a small opening that we were ushered through onto a grassy area. This area on the other side of the fence was designated as the "free speech zone".

Malachy led the program and, as usual, he spoke eloquently about why we need to continue this work. He talked about NCNR writing letters to elected and appointed officials over the last several years. We have NEVER received a response. This is chilling. As citizens, we should be able to communicate with our government about our concerns. There is something gravely wrong with our country that they do not pay attention to what we say. If we were lobbyists for a defense contractor, big oil, or another big corporation we would be welcomed into the offices on Capitol Hill and at the Pentagon. But we, as citizens, do not have any access to government officials. How do we try to change the world when those in power refuse to listen to us?

Hendrik Vos spoke movingly about how our government supports undemocratic governments in Latin America. He talked about the importance of our civil resistance action with our willingness to risk arrest. Paul Magno was inspiring as he talked about the many civil resistance actions that we are building on, including the Plowshare activists.

After listening to the speakers eight of us who were risking arrest walked through the small opening onto the sidewalk to try to deliver our letter to Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, or a representative in a policy-making position. We were on a sidewalk that the public regularly walks on to enter the Pentagon.

We were immediately stopped by Officer Ballard. He did not look very friendly as he told us we were blocking the sidewalk and that we had to re-enter the "free speech zone". We told him we would stand against the fence so people could freely

pass by.

Again, someone with no power from the PR office came to meet us and accept our letter, but we were told there would be no dialogue. Ballard told us we had to leave or we would be arrested.

We were eight concerned nonviolent individuals standing peacefully against the fence on a public sidewalk. When we said we couldn't leave until we talked to someone in a position of authority, Ballard told another officer to give us our three warnings.

Malachy began to read the letter we wanted to deliver to Secretary Carter as the three warnings were given.

After the third warning, they closed the opening to the free speech area, and about 20 officers from the SWAT team, who were waiting 30 feet away, came charging at us. I will never forget the look of rage on the face of the officer who came towards Malachy and violently snatched the letter out of his hands and put him in cuffs.

I could see this was going to be another violent arrest at the Pentagon. In April of 2011, NCNR organized an action at the Pentagon and there was a lot of violence by the police at that time also. They knocked Eve Tetaz to the ground and violently wrenching my arm up behind my back. I heard reports from others that they were also roughed up that day.

My arresting officer told me to put my hands behind my back. The cuffs were tightened and he jerked them tighter still, causing a great deal of pain. Five days after the arrest my hand is still bruised and tender.

Trudy was crying out in pain because her cuffs were so tight. She asked that they be loosened, and the officer told her that if she didn't like it, she should not be doing this again. None of the arresting officers were wearing nametags and so

could not be identified.

We were arrested at around 2:30 pm and released around 4:00 pm. The processing was minimal. I noticed some of the men were patted down before we were put into the police van, but I wasn't. Once we arrived at the processing station, they cut our handcuffs off immediately as we entered the building, and then the women were put in one cell and the men in another. They took mug shots of all of us, but did not fingerprint any of us. Fingerprinting takes a long time and maybe when they got our ids, they found that all of our fingerprints were already in their system.

Arrested were Manijeh Saba of New Jersey, Stephen Bush of Virginia, Max Obuszewski and Malachy Kilbride of Maryland, Trudy Silver and Felton Davis of New York, and Phil Runkel and Joy First of Wisconsin.

David Barrows and Paul Magno provided support and were waiting to meet us as we were released.

We were at the Pentagon exercising our First Amendment rights and our obligations under Nuremberg, and also as human beings concerned with the plight of Mother Earth. We were on a sidewalk that was used by the public peacefully asking for a meeting with someone in the Pentagon, and then reading the letter that we had sent to the Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter. We did not commit a crime, but we were acting in resistance to the crimes of our government, and yet we were charged with violating a lawful order. This is the definition of civil resistance

It is a very serious problem that our calls for peace and justice are going unheeded by government officials. Even though it seems like we are not being listened to, it is very important to continue to act in resistance. I know that even when we feel like we are ineffective, acting in resistance is my only choice to do what I can to make a difference in the

lives of my grandchildren and the children of the world. Though it is difficult to know whether we are being effective, I believe that we all must do everything we can to continue our work for peace and justice. That is our only hope.

[Pictures from the arrests at the Pentagon.](#)

End the Wars at Home and Abroad

[End the Wars at Home and Abroad](#)

UNAC Conference in Secaucus, NJ May 8-10

Please come to [UNAC Conference 2015](#) and experience a united movement for peace and justice inside this country and around the world. Ed Kinane, Judy Bello, Nick Mottern, Malachy Kilbride will join Medea Benjamin, Kathy Kelly, David Swanson, Osagyefu Sekou, Abayomi Azikiwe and Glen Ford, and many more presenting at this conference.

Secaucus is 20 minutes from Manhattan. Check our [Website](#) for logistics and program information. We have an [Exchange Board](#) for sharing rides and housing. And, an incredible list of speakers and participants.

The world is being ravaged by endless U.S. wars, both open and secret; life-threatening global warming and environmental destruction; devastating poverty and disease. Here at home we face unprecedented attacks on labor, immigrants, the poor and oppressed; a massive and racist prison-industrial complex; the increasing militarization of the police and an epidemic

of police abuse as in Ferguson, Mo.; widespread domestic spying and an expanding “national security state”; trillions of dollars spent on the military to police the world and bail out the corporate 1 percent while we face severe attacks on the basic necessities of life.

We need to to see ourselves as elements of the same living network. This conference will be a convergence of people and ideas, a place to share our concerns, our dreams and our plans.

Secaucus is 20 minutes from Manhattan. Check our [Website](#) for logistics and program information. We have an [Exchange Board](#) for sharing rides and housing. And, an incredible list of speakers and participants You may not recognize all the names. I know I didn't. But, that's the point. **Lets all get together and see what happens!**

- *Susan Abulhawa*
- [Al Awda Palestine Right to Return Coalition](#)
- [Alliance for Global Justice](#)
- [Anakbayan](#)
- *Abayomi Azikiwe*
- *Ajamu Baraka*
- [Battered Mothers Custody Conference](#)
- [BAYAN Filipino Alliance – USA](#)
- *Medea Benjamin*
- [Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace](#)
- [Black Agenda Report](#)
- [Black Workers for Justice](#)
- *Bolivarian Circle*
- [Canadian Arab Federation](#)
- [Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War](#)
- [Chicago Antiwar Committee](#)
- [Coalition of Black Trade Unionists](#)
- [CodePink](#)

- *Columbus Campaign for Arms Control for Mother Earth*
- [Committee to Stop FBI Repression](#)
- [Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu Jamal](#)
- [Coop Anti War Cafe Berlin](#)
- *Cuban Five (by Skype)*
- *Lamis Deek*
- [Fellowship of Reconciliation](#)
- [Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality](#)
- [Don't Shoot Coalition, St. Louis](#)
- [Equality for Flatbush](#)
- [Fellowship of Reconciliation](#)
- [FIST – Fight Imperialism Stand Together](#)
- *Glen Ford*
- [Friends of the Congo](#)
- [Gabriela – NU Filipino Women's Group](#)
- *Bruce Gagnon*
- [Global Network Against Weapons in Space](#)
- *Grannies for Peace*
- *Petra Guerra*
- *Larry Hamm*
- *Jaribu Hill*
- [Honduras Resistencia USA](#)
- [ILPS – International League for People's Struggles](#)
- [ILWU Local 10](#)
- [International Action Center](#)
- [Jericho Movement](#)
- [Jersey City Peace Movement](#)
- *Chuck Kaufman*
- *Kathy Kelly*
- *Malachy Kilbride*
- *Ed Kinane*
- *Literary Academy for Dalit of Nepal*
- [Malcolm X Grassroots Coalition](#)
- [May 1 Workers & Immigrant Rights Coalition](#)
- *Ray McGovern*
- *Cynthia McKinney*
- *Michael McPhearson*

- [MECAWI – Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice](#)
- [Millennial Activists United](#)
- [Million Worker March](#)
- [Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights](#)
- *Nick Mottern*
- [Move 9 Support Committee](#)
- [MAWO – Movement Against War and Occupation, Vancouver](#)
- *Malik Mujahid*
- [Muslims for Social Justice](#)
- [Muslim Peace Coalition](#)
- [National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms](#)
- *North American Climate Conservation & Environment*
- [OccuEvolve](#)
- *Lucy Pagoada*
- [Pakistan USA Freedom Forum](#)
- [Pan African Newswire](#)
- [Peace and Neutrality Alliance, Ireland](#)
- [People's Justice for Community Control and Police Accountability](#)
- [People's Organization for Progress](#)
- [People's Power Assemblies](#)
- [Popular Resistance](#)
- [Project SALAM](#)
- [Raging Grannies](#)
- *Rhode Island Antiwar Committee*
- [Rochester Peace Action & Education](#)
- [Roots Action](#)
- [Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project](#)
- *Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou*
- [Socialist Action / Ligue pour l'Action socialiste, Canadian state](#)
- [Socialist Caucus, New Democratic Party, Canada](#)
- [SI – Solidarity Iran](#)
- *Lynne Stewart*
- [SDS – Students for Democratic Society](#)
- [SJP – Students for Justice in Palestine](#)

- *David Swanson*
 - *Debra Sweet*
 - [Syracuse Peace Council](#)
 - [Syrian American Forum](#)
 - *Clarence Thomas*
 - [United for Justice with Peace](#)
 - [Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones & End the War](#)
 - [VFP – Veterans For Peace](#)
 - [Virginia People’s Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice](#)
 - [Voices for Creative Non-Violence](#)
 - [WAMM – Women Against Military Madness](#)
 - [World Beyond War](#)
 - [World Can’t Wait](#)
 - *Ann Wright*
 - *Kevin Zeese*
 - *More*
-

German Activist Confronts Foreign Minister Over Drones



Activist Elsa Rassback and German Foreign Minister Steinmeier

German activists are engaged in drone resistance around US

Ramstein base which houses a critical repeater that is necessary for drone strikes in West Asia and Africa. Ramstein has been a critical asset to US wars since the US occupation of West Germany after World War II. Now it's drone control. There are a number of things going on in German resistance at present.

ECCHR, the [European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights](#), is arguing a lawsuit against Germany on behalf of Yemeni citizens whose relatives were killed in drone strikes. The issue is that Germany is supporting the US base at Ramstein where there is a repeater that makes US drone strikes in West Asia and Africa possible. The ask is for Germany to make the US remove the repeater at Ramstein and not allow it to be replaced on German soil.

So they aren't asking for transparency and explanations but rather the cessation of German support for US drone strikes. The German government has been hiding the facts on this issue and denying responsibility. However, the truth is [documented](#) on the Intercept, which ran a great article by Jeremy Scahill on the case a week ago. They will have to confront their complicity in a program of targeted killing and random murder of civilians around the globe.

German American activist Elsa Rassbach had the good fortune to run into Foreign Minister Steinmeier at a function recently, where she share with him a little piece of her mind. Good Going Elsa!

NYU Students Harrased for Opposing Drone Murder

To our classmates and Members of the NYU Community:

Below, please find our response to recent events at NYU Law concerning student organizing around and support for the Statement of No Confidence in Harold Koh.

"We do not kill our cattle the way the US is killing humans in Waziristan with drones." –Rafiq ur Rehman

In the fall of 2013, Rafiq ur Rehman [traveled](#) with his 13-year-old son, Zubair, and 9-year-old daughter, Nabila, from their small village in North Waziristan to Capitol Hill. Their purpose in making this long and painful trek was simple: to appeal to the hearts of U.S. lawmakers by sharing stories of the carnage wrought upon their community and upon their family by U.S. drone strikes. In 2012, a U.S. drone strike had killed Rafiq's elderly mother and severely wounded two of his young children.

Only five members of Congress showed up.

The suffering of thousands of individuals like Rafiq, Zubair, and Nabila, moved a few of us to author a [Statement of No Confidence in Harold H. Koh](#). The Statement is fairly simple. It argues that due to Mr. Koh's role as a key legal architect of the Obama administration's targeted killing program, a program that violates International Human Rights Law, the Law School should not have hired him to teach that particular body of law. The petition extensively documents the factual basis for our position—and echoes the concerns of other students, academics, and human rights activists.

The gravity of targeted killings via drones and the factual basis upon which we built our petition warranted this expression of disaffection. Academic institutions, after all, are supposed to be places for honest and critical debates. At times, we have known NYU Law to be such a place—that is, a setting where compassionate and thoughtful people confront, rather than dismiss uncomfortable facts.

While we welcomed disagreement with the petition, we never fathomed that some faculty and administrators would, intentionally or not, work hard to quash our expression of dissent and intimidate numerous students. Professor Ryan Goodman, for instance, emailed every individual signatory of the petition, including some of his own students and advisees, and urged them to withdraw their support for the Statement. Withdrawal, he stated, “will reflect well on us as a community.” Due to the power imbalances between students and faculty, we find his request inappropriate.

Stephen Bright, meanwhile, a Yale Law professor and known anti-death penalty lawyer, sent a [disparaging email](#) to his former intern, an organizer of the petition and an aspiring anti-death penalty lawyer, following repeated phone calls. He asked her whether she didn’t have better things to do with her time, and later claimed that the petition arose out of ignorance and inexperience. Concerning our corporate colleagues who signed the petition, Mr. Bright asked, “Does someone who is going to a firm to make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year representing corporations [have] any position to express a lack of confidence in Harold Koh?” Finally, another student was told that s/he was not welcome at Human Rights First for an internship since the organization held Harold Koh in high regard and was aware of the student’s signature on the petition.[1]

Rather than a trial of the Obama administration’s targeted killing program, and the distortion of Human Rights Law that it represents, what we have seen unfolding over the past few

weeks is the trial of students, mostly women and students of color, who have been dismissed as “naïve” and maligned as “smearers.” There has been no acknowledgement of the concern for human life that prompted the petition, or any acknowledgement that the more than 260 supporters of the students’ Statement include lawyers, students, scholars and pacifists from all over the globe.

Figuring prominently in this trial is Dean Trevor Morrison, who preemptively announced his verdict prior to meeting with the authors of the recent CoLR Statement: “[allegations of intimidation] are unfounded.” Ironically, the Dean himself, in his first-year constitutional law class, had described the petition as “smear,” “wholly inaccurate” and, once again, urged students to withhold support. Two of his students did, in fact, withdraw their signatures from the petition despite privately expressing agreement with its merits.

Soon after, the Dean initiated a meeting with the organizers of the petition, ostensibly for the purpose of making our upcoming [event](#) “productive.” In the process, he called our public letters “vitriol *unseen* in the law school” and accused us of “inflicting *wounds that will not heal*.” His words, uttered to three students of color, two of whom are of South Asian descent, revealed a painful truth: the wounds inflicted upon the egos of the powerful are recognized and defended, while the wounds of Rafiq, Zubair, Nabila and thousands of unnamed others fail to register—not in our university discourse or in the government’s civilian casualty count. This, more than anything else, illustrates what this petition aims to counter and why it is so important.

For all that has been said by some members of the faculty and administration, we have been saddened by the silences prevailing in their responses. None of the thousands of people assassinated by U.S. drones are mentioned—not once. There has been no questioning of the “Drone War’s” legitimacy or meaningful engagement with our concern that Mr. Koh did in

fact provide the legal rationale and cover for this program. There has been no reflection upon the relationship between state-sponsored violence abroad and state-sponsored violence here at home, in places like Ferguson, [North Charleston](#), and New York. And there has been little concern with human rights becoming a field that legitimizes U.S. global hegemony by masking its questionable interference in the social and political structures of other nations.

Indeed, the silences do not stop there. Neither the facts nor the sources that we extensively cite and upon which we base our critique, were genuinely examined. Rather, they were largely dismissed. Meanwhile, we have been [accused](#) of leveling attacks that are not [“evidence-based”](#) and of launching nothing more than a “smear” campaign. We wonder: if we have gotten the facts wrong about Mr. Koh’s well-documented role in shaping and defending the U.S. government’s targeted killing program, why haven’t the true facts surfaced? Why are we asked to blindly take the word of his friends, who speak of past actions that have no bearing on his role in this particular violation?

We have sought to understand the troubling responses that we have received from some faculty and administrators. It occurs to us that those in government who defend drone attacks in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and now [the Philippines](#), or who justify wars whether in Iraq or Libya, expect to waltz comfortably through the revolving door from government back into the academy, while demanding silence concerning these crimes.

We desire to break these silences in order to demand accountability and to express our outrage with the devaluation of human life that the U.S. extrajudicial killing program reflects.

The Undersigned,
Aman Singh

Lisa Sangoi
Amanda Bass
Dami Obaro
Saif Ansari
Jon Laks

[1] For these reasons, the NYU Law student signatories are temporarily unavailable for public viewing.

Drone Pilots, Please Don't Fly

Nick Motten of Knowdrones.com has created a video ad to run on TV that calls out to drone pilots asking them to stop flying. The ad is quite graphic and emotionally demanding. It has stirred up some controversy and interest in areas where it has been shown so far.

Here is the Ad:

Airing ads is a very expensive business. But, Nick has been getting great responses to the ads when he has aired them. What follows is a report from his website, KnowDrones.com

You can support this effort through the [GoFundMe Page](#).

We need your help to continue an extraordinary campaign that uses a 15-second television commercial to show the **UNCENSORED TRUTH** about drone murder to hundreds of thousands, or more, U.S. television viewers!

We are now entering the second phase of this advertising

campaign, and we are asking you to **please contribute toward a total of \$8,000 that will be needed**, minimally, to run the TV ad in areas surrounding drone control centers at Hancock Air National Guard Base outside Syracuse, NY; Niagara Falls Air National Guard Base; Whiteman AFB near Knob Noster, MO; and Cannon AFB near Clovis, NM.

The campaign is being coordinated with local cable companies and networks by Information in the Public Interest, an activist social justice ad agency that produces issue-advertising for only progressive peace, environmental and social justice causes, operated by Cres Vellucci, a member of Veterans for Peace and other anti-war groups. Contributions are not tax deductible because the agency does political work. All the money collected goes directly to buying airtime for the commercials. \$25 may buy a spot on CNN, \$50 a spot on MSNBC (depending on the rates in local areas).

Please contribute whatever you can, and circulate this appeal far and wide.

Thank you for considering this request.

In solidarity,

Nick Mottern, <http://www.knowdrones.com/>

Cres Vellucci, Vets for Peace and Information in the Public Interest

So Far:

On February 27, this **first-ever TV commercial** began a week-long run on various cable channels in Las Vegas, NV, including CNN and MSNBC, showing viewers living near the Creech AFB drone control center what they probably have never seen before – **children killed and mutilated by U.S. drones**. It's graphic but necessary.

On Mar 31, the same commercial began a month's run on CNN,

MSNBC and even FoxNews in and around Beale AFB outside Sacramento, CA, a base critical to supporting U.S. killer drone operations.

We consider these showings to be a remarkable achievement because **until now the images of those killed and injured by U.S. drones have been kept off of American television screens.**

In addition to showing drone victims, the voice-over on the ad says: ***“Drone pilots, please refuse to fly.”***

There is growing news coverage about the commercials. Here is a link to an article in the *Sacramento Bee*, the major paper in northern California and part of the McClatchy Company news chain: <http://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article17894003.html>

This resulted in this article in *Air Force Times*, which will be read by many Air Force people and their families around the world:

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2015/04/09/commercials-against-drone-strikes/25532163/>

Vice News followed with this report: <https://news.vice.com/article/graphic-new-veteran-sponsored-ads-are-asking-drone-pilots-not-to-fly>

Here is a link to an RT report also resulting from the showing of the ad near Beale: <http://youtu.be/GTdlqqdrZ1U>

And this is a report on KFBK, a radio station with a wide reach in northern California: <http://www.kfbk.com/articles/kfbk-news-461777/new-tv-ads-take-aim-at-13461862/>

The Guardian published this piece:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/01/anti-drone-television-ad-us-air-force-bases-california-nevada>

*** All video clips and footage in the advertisements come from the independent short documentary film, *Wounds of Waziristan* (www.woundsofwaziristan.com), directed by filmmaker and journalist, Madiha Tahir and co-produced by Messiah Rhodes and AJ Russo. The half-hour film features two survivors of drone attacks. One of them, Saddam, can be seen in the ad holding the photo of his dead niece. The documentary was released on *Vice Motherboard* as well as *Democracy Now!* marking the first time that Americans saw an extended portrayal of the consequences of drone attacks.

Here are links to additional coverage of this campaign. Please note particularly David Swanson's report that was critical in generating other coverage and which includes a list quotes addressing the illegality and immorality of drone war as well as a drone war fact sheet.

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/_search/david+swanson+refuse+to+fly/14c6e0f2c7d26fe6

<http://m.reviewjournal.com/news/las-vegas/anti-drone-protesters-arrested-creech-air-force-base>

<http://www.publicnewsservice.org/2015-03-05/peace/nv-protesters-american-drones-killing-children/a44947-1>

My Five Days in “Pod A” at the Juneau County Jail

Guest Post by Bonnie Block

On April 1, 2015 a six person jury found me guilty of

trespassing at the Volk Field Open House because I handed out leaflets with four questions about drone warfare in the parking lot of the Wisconsin National Guard Museum. National Guard personnel deemed that "propaganda" sight unseen. The result was my arrest, being charged with trespass, pretrial motions to greatly limit the evidence I could present to the jury and ultimately the trial. The fine was \$232 but I felt I couldn't in good conscience pay it.

So Judge Paul Curran sentenced me to serve five days in the county jail. After I was "booked in" and issued my orange jump suit and orange plastic clogs, I was escorted to Pod A where I became the 7th woman living in a two-story cinderblock room about 35 by 15 feet. The front half was common space with metal tables with stools or benches attached, a TV high the wall, a cabinet with the various request forms and some books & games or puzzles and two phones. The front wall was one-way glass so guards in the "bubble" could see in but we couldn't see out.

The back half of the room was divided into two levels each of which had five bunk-beds and a bathroom with shower. There were seven narrow windows on each level but they were opaque so no one could see out. The TV was on from 8 am till 11 pm (or 12:30 am on weekends) as were bright florescent lights which were dimmed after "lockdown" but never turned off.

[NOTE: The Juneau County Jail was built in 2002 and its website describes the jail like this: "This modern Pod design allows Jail Deputies to restrict and control the movement of prisoners throughout the facility, while minimizing the staff needed to monitor and control the population. This layout places Pod's or housing units around a centralized control center from which a single deputy can monitor all of the cells and each pod. The Control Deputy can control cell doors, lights, water, inmate's communications and inmate movement. CCTV monitoring is conducted from the central control station as well."]

I set my small storage box and bedding on Cot #2 as directed and the guard left slamming the metal door shut. I introduced myself to four of the women (the other two were napping) and told them why I was there. We talked a while and then I went to make my bed. One of the women came to help because the sheets were only about 2/3 the length of the blue plastic mat that served as a mattress, but if you knotted them together just right you could cover the whole pad.

A few hours later as I was working on a puzzle, I realized I was chilly because I only had a short sleeved shirt and no socks (my socks, bra, and turtleneck were the wrong color so they stayed in storage in the booking area). I went to put my towel around my neck like a shawl. Immediately there was a voice over the intercom: "Ladies, please inform the new person what the rules are." The rules are that you cannot cover your neck or face. I put the towel back and rubbed my arms. Without a word one of the women went to her box and brought me a thermal long-sleeved shirt and another brought me a warm pair of socks – both regulation white. Thanks to their generosity I was comfortable for the rest of my stay.

As I listened to these women for the next few days I heard stories of being victimized or suffering abuse, of addiction to drugs, of homelessness, of illness, of needing dental care or surgery, of poverty and unemployment, and of more than a dozen children in foster care or cared for by relatives while their mothers were locked up. Five of the six women were there because they couldn't make bail or were on a probation hold. Only one had already been tried and sentenced to one year in jail.

I entered the Jail voluntarily to make a public witness with support from family and friends and knowing I would get out in five days. They entered abruptly and now sit waiting weeks or months for a court date, or a visitor (allowed once a week) or till they could make a phone call (\$1.50 a minute to a corporation called Securus which someone outside has to pay in

advance and then accept the collect calls.) They waited for mail or finding a book that looked interesting, or for the Friday commissary pick-up (assuming someone had put money in their account.) And they walked—54 times around the common area was a mile and you counted it off with a deck of cards.

I've seen clients in various Wisconsin jails and prisons and I've visited fellow resisters in jail — but it's very different to have metal doors clang shut and know that you've lost your freedom. I expected there to be regimentation and rules — but I had no idea of how frustrating and aggravating the guard's collective punishment mindset would be. I knew I'd be locked up in a confined space — but didn't understand what happens when you don't know if it's day or night and feel cut off from the natural world. I knew there would be little privacy and a lot of surveillance—but I didn't know how dehumanizing that would feel.

In short, I have been one of the absurdly privileged people who has not had to face the punitive U.S. criminal justice system—just as I have not lived in countries beneath the Hellfire Missiles carried by U.S. drones that I'm working hard to stop. As I was writing this reflection a few days after I got out of jail, the daily e-mail from Campaign Nonviolence arrived and put both of these things into context.

“No one today can afford to be innocent, or to indulge themselves in ignorance of the nature of contemporary governments, politics and social orders. The national polities of the modern world are “states” which maintain their existence by deliberately fostered craving and fear: monstrous protection rackets.” [Gary Snyder, *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*, p. 83]

It is precisely our “craving and fear” which makes us wrongly believe we are protected from the “terrorists” by our government's program of targeted assassination via drones. And it is precisely “a protection racket” which makes us think spending billions on jails and prisons is being “tough on

crime” and that we’re safer if we lock people up in cells or Pods without adequate services or diversion programs and often before they’ve even been convicted of a crime.

Just as we can’t kill our way to peace and security, we can’t imprison our way to public safety and justice. Militarism and drone warfare are not the answer. Nor are jails the answer. Those who have created the current systems are not going to be the ones who fix it. That’s up to us as nonviolent, determined, and relentlessly persistent activists.

Bonnie’s description of her experiences will resonate with many of us who have spent a few days in the county lockup. Five days in jail for distributing flyers opposing drone warfare. Such is life in the land of the free. The questions on Bonnie’s Leaflet should be shared widely: [Four Questions that Will help you Understand What Military Drones Do](#)

Here is Bonnie’s note regarding publishing her description: *I read the postings and rarely reply but this time I’m attaching my reflections about the five days I spent in the Juneau County Jail for refusing to pay the fine when I was found guilty of trespassing at Volk Field’s open house last May. Fr. Jim Murphy and I were arrested for leafletting with four questions about drones. The questions are also attached in a quarter page handout which the National Guard personnel declared was “propaganda” without even reading it.*

Press Release: Creech Peacewalk

**Nevada Desert Experience Annual SACRED PEACE WALK 2015
to the NEVADA NATIONAL SECURITY SITE, YUCCA MOUNTAIN & CREECH
AIR FORCE BASE
MARCH 28 TO APRIL 3**

The Annual 65-Mile Peace Walk begins this Sunday, March 29, 8:30 AM, at the Atomic Testing Museum, 755 E Flamingo Rd, Las Vegas, NV.

A Powerful, 65-Mile Walking Meditation across the Mojave Desert, in the name of Peace. Responding to renewed calls to resume testing of nuclear weapons and to store high level nuclear waste and increased usage of drone assassinations, all at government facilities in Nevada, local peace activists will be joined by others from around the United States, Europe and Japan, for the Nevada Desert Experience's Sacred Peace Walk (S.P.W.). Many of those walking are Buddhist Monks and Nuns from Japan, and are including the SPW as a leg of their own walk from San Francisco to the United Nations, in New York City, for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference taking place in May.

This 65-mile, annual pilgrimage to the Nevada National Security Site (formerly The Nevada Test Site/NTS) begins on March 28 with an orientation in Las Vegas. On March 29 (Palm Sunday) at 8:30 AM, the walkers will start their trek from the Atomic Testing Museum with a short program of prayer and song. By Tuesday evening, March 31, the walkers expect to be in Cactus Springs where they will be guests at the Temple of Goddess Spirituality. The next morning, April 1, the walkers will engage in a nonviolent protest at Creech Air Force Base. Later that day, they will join with members of the Western Shoshone Nation on the south side of Yucca Mountain to pray for the healing of the Earth. The SPW concludes on Good Friday

as we greet the sunrise with the Western Shoshone, and then have a Good Friday liturgy and procession to the entrance to the Nevada Test Site later in the morning.

Contact

Brian Terrell (773) 853-1886

John Amidon: (518) 312-6442

Mary Lou Anderson (702) 572-7249 or Visit Us at:
nevadadesertexperience.org