

Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars

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Surprise Conditional Discharge for Hancock Drone Resister Mark Colville

Mark Colville, a Catholic Worker from New Haven Connecticut was sentenced this afternoon in DeWitt Town Court on 5 charges stemming from a protest at Hancock Air National Guard Base on December 9 of last year, when he and two Yale Divinity School students presented flowers and a People's Order of Protection for the children of Afghanistan and their families at the guard gate. In a surprise decision, Judge Robert Jokl sentenced Colville to a 1 year Conditional Discharge and \$1000 fine. He said that sending Colville to prison would not serve justice, nor would parole serve any good purpose, and he did not issue a permanent Order of Protection. Colville was facing 2 years in jail on 5 counts including Contempt of a Judicial Judgment and Obstructing Governmental Administration.

In his pre-sentencing statement Colville said that he had come to the base in response to an "urgent, personal plea" by Afghan youth Raz Mohammad on behalf of his family. Mohammad's brother in law was killed in a drone strike in 2008. Earlier today Mohammad wrote to Colville *"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."*

In his pre-sentencing remarks, Attorney Jonathon Wallace said that the law is like a sail; that without the wind of public morality, it is nothing more than a pile of cloth on the floor. Colville called out the Judge, saying that nothing will change until someone sitting in his chair decides to apply the laws that are there to protect the innocent.

Colville's protest is part of a worldwide nonviolent movement against the use of weaponized drones. On July 10, 2014, Mary Anne Grady Flores from Ithaca was sentenced to a year in prison for violating an Order of Protection. She is currently free on appeal. Jack Gilroy from Binghamton was just released after two months in jail for his nonviolent protest on April 28, 2013. He faces three years on probation. On December 10, Julienne Oldfield of Syracuse will be tried for her act of civil resistance at the same April protest. There are 11 more trials scheduled for Hancock protesters in DeWitt between now and next July. There are more 11 trials scheduled for Hancock protesters.

Hancock Air National Guard Base is a training site for pilots, technicians and sensor operators. Heavily armed Reapers piloted at Hancock fly lethal missions over Afghanistan and possibly elsewhere. Hancock pilots also fly test flights from Fort Drum over Lake Ontario. Upstate Drone Action has been protesting the Drones at Hancock Base since 2009 with bimonthly vigils, annual rallies, educational events and nonviolent civil resistance. For more information go to upstatedroneaction.org