

# Messages from Iraqi Refugees, Cankiri Turkey

from Cathy Breen, May 6, 2015, Cankiri, Turkey

Dear Friends,

As I write I am looking out a bus window at a beautiful landscape of rolling hills and mountains. Everything is green, and the trees are budding. It is hard to know where to begin. In the past week, I have traveled hundreds of miles by bus and train in order to visit Iraqi refugees living here. Eskisehir, Ankara, Bolu, Mersin and now Cankiri. Some of the families are refugees twice over, having fled to Syria where we first met them some years ago. Others fled more recently after ISIS took Mosel last June and then the surrounding villages. Some of them I was meeting for the first time. Muslims, Christians and Palestinians, all from Iraq.

Last night Iraqi friends, refugees themselves, took me to a family I had not yet met. I thanked them for receiving me and explained how many people come with me on this trip wanting to know how he and his family are doing. Upon hearing this, he could hardly contain his emotions, his words spilling out rapidly.

*"We have been waiting for someone to come!" he exclaimed. "We needed someone to visit us. We are happy that someone is thinking of us."*

A handicapped sister, 39 years of age, sat on the floor beside



him. His wife and four sons surrounded him: 21, 19, 15 and 10 years of age. The family has only been registered by the Turkish government, and were given a date of December 2021 for their interview with the UNHCR. At this time, almost six years from now, their history

will be taken and the family will be asked if they have relatives anywhere else in the world. Only then might they be considered for resettlement. In the meantime, work is not permitted and children are not in school! How are they to live?

Earlier in the day I met with another refugee family with three children, ages 8 and 6 years and 4 months. They were given an interview date for the UNHCR of Sept. 2022. Yes, you read correctly .... seven years from now! None of the above mentioned children are in school. By 2022 these children will be 15 and 13 years of age, and the youngest just turning school age. The father's parents are both in Australia, but the UNHCR will not register that fact until 2022, unless their interview date is moved forward. The father said he pled repeatedly with the clerk at the registration office to give them a date not so far in the future.

The family I am staying with also have a 10 year old child with cerebral palsy in addition to two other daughters, 9 and 3 years old.

I held this child in my arms in Damascus, Syria in 2009. When

given no hope for resettlement, the father returned to Mosel with his wife and then, two daughters.

Both parents of the father recently received citizenship in Canada after being resettled there as refugees four years ago. The parents of the mother



have been recently resettled in Australia with refugee status. Because of his handicapped daughter, the family has been granted an interview date with the UNHCR for November of 2017. Only one and a half years to wait! Only at that interview however will their history be taken and the UNHCR will solicit information about family members living outside of Iraq. Only then might they begin the tedious path for resettlement.

One thing is clear. The UNHCR is completely overwhelmed by the refugee crisis, unable to offer protection, financial assistance, food rations, schooling, etc. Mothers and fathers are beside themselves with worry as their children are not in school. One refugee related how an Iraqi camped out in front of the UNHCR office for days in an attempt to draw attention to their plight. One of the guards told the demonstrator that Iraqi families had done the same and it had made no difference. *"Nobody cares"* is the general feeling.

Forced to look for work *"under the table,"* I heard multiple stories of Iraqis working 10 to 12 hour days for a fraction of the money Turkish people would receive for the same work or, worse yet, not receiving any compensation for their labor.

*"We are like people drowning" was how one refugee described the situation. "All families are scattered, and we ask Americans who were behind all this to help Iraqis now."*

*Cathy Breen is a Catholic Worker who lives in NYC, and has made many trips to Iraq since the first Iraq War and the imposition of draconian sanctions of Iraq in the 90s. She has been there at least twice over the last 3 years. This is the third of a series of reports she wrote during her most recent trip this spring.*

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## Messages from Iraq: Erbil

from Cathy Breen, Erbil, Kurdistan, Northern Iraq, April 28, 2015

Dear Friends,

Each year Catholics read from the Book of Acts in the period following the Easter celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. This morning's reading speaks of "*those who had been scattered by the persecution.*" Over a span of more than eight years, I had ample opportunity as Voices for Creative Nonviolence to meet many Iraqi Christian refugees in Jordan and Syria. I was often gripped by their stories, and the visions and dreams given to them as the "*suffering church.*"

Last September I had hoped to travel to the village areas surrounding Mosel to hear their voices, so often neglected since the U.S.-led war on their country over a decade ago. And then as we know, in early June of 2014, ISIS took the city of Mosel. I write all of this to help explain the deep emotions that welled up in me as I entered one of the compounds for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Erbil just two days ago. The Sunday service had just ended and people were streaming out of the tent that serves as their church.



This compound, called Ozal city, in the Kasnizan area of Erbil in Kurdistan, houses approximately 900 Christian families, 400 Muslim families, and 35 Yazidi families. It is just one of many compounds in Erbil. Almost all of the Christians in this complex, if not all, come from

the village of Qaraqosh, a Syriac Catholic enclave, outside of Mosel.

In early August in a 24 hour period, more than 50,000 fled Qaraqosh, the total population of that village together with thousands they had given refuge to from Mosel. I would visit about eight or nine families in the course of the day, meeting the children and hearing accounts of their situations. Some of them were unable to share any of the details of their fleeing ISIS. It was just too painful.

It is important to note that the majority had fled their village twice, the first time in June due to warnings from ISIS, aka Da'ash. But after a few days the families felt they could return. On August 6th however, in the span of 24 hours, over 50,000 fled Qarakos. Da'ash had given people three days to decide their fate. To convert and pay money, or be executed.

As ISIS surrounded the village, they were able to stop people on the road as they fled. Cars were taken, and all of their money and jewelry. Even, at times, suitcases. One fighter took a baby's bottle saying "*Christians don't have the right to live.*" People continued on foot in the merciless heat with just the clothes on their back. The absence of suitcases and household items in the rooms I visited testified to this. Not a single family photo was on display.

One sister told me she knew a family where ISIS took the three

year old daughter, never to be seen again.

Three Dominican sisters live among the displaced, as well as two Redemptorist priests and a brother. They too are from Qaraqosh. One of the priests was wounded in 2004 when his car was crushed by a U.S. tank. A fellow priest in the car was killed. The priest who met with me can no longer go up the stairs as both of his legs suffered multiple breaks. A handsome man, he told us *"This was my first experience with Americans...Many people translating for the U.S. were killed...We are wounded on the inside."* He feels that people are being called to live in peace, respecting one another. "The differences between people is a source of richness for us. Our God is our future, we are on earth temporarily. Our God is our future" he repeated.

The other priest, dynamic and just as good looking, wanted to speak without a translator.

*"The U.S. government has two faces: one of diplomacy, the other of Da'ash. Everyone knows what America is doing. America must confess and admit 'We have killed people and now we need to ask for forgiveness'. ...The U.S. has not only destroyed a country and a people, but the culture. And not just of Iraq. Of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine..."*

It has been over a year since I have been in Iraq, and on this trip I have heard repeatedly in every place I have been, Muslim or Christian, a strong belief that Da'ash is a creation of the U.S., that the U.S. is responsible for Da'ash and is out to destroy Iraq. People ask themselves, and me, why?

The Dominican sister acting as my guide and translator throughout the day was as tireless as she was gracious. In the late afternoon we came upon an older gentlemen who was sitting on a mat visiting with two other men. This was in yet another compound in Erbil housing about 160 displaced Christian families from Qaraqosh. Some of the families are living 20

people in a small space.

Upon learning that I was from the United States, Mr. Shukrallah (which means thanks be to God), became agitated and angry. *"I want to write a letter to Obama" he said shaking his finger at me, 'in the name of everyone here.'* "

*"I want to tell him that America did nothing for us. They did this to me." He has bone cancer. "We have nobody. Only God, because we are Christians. Obama sent the dogs [ISIS] to eat us. This is the reality. You have to bring my voice to Obama. Say to him for all the Christians from our village : You did bad for the Christian people in Iraq. I have cancer and cannot walk. In some way, Saddam Hussein was better than Obama even though he was a dictator. Because he [Saddam] did not treat us in this way."*

He wanted my word. He wanted a promise from me that I would get this letter to Obama. I told him that ordinarily I would have little hope that such a letter would reach the president. But, I told him, because of all the faith I had witnessed this day in the people around me, I felt that such a miracle could be possible! As we took our leave, Mr. Shukrallah's anger had dissipated and he pressed my hand warmly. I find there is a great need for Iraqis to be able to express themselves to someone from the U.S. It humbles me to be the representative.



There is much to write, but it will have to wait. Everyone, without exception, wanted to return to Qaraqosh. Everyone, without exception was tired and worn, worrying about the future, not seeing any way out. But each one, without exception, said their faith had deepened in these times of

great trial. I assured them that many people come with me on this trip wanting to express their solidarity and friendship. When I asked what, if anything, we could do the response was

*“Pray, pray, pray.”*

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**Cathy Breen** is a Catholic Worker who lives in NYC, and has made many trips to Iraq since the first Iraq War and the imposition of draconian sanctions of Iraq in the 90s. She has been there at least twice over the last 3 years. This is the second of a series of reports she wrote during her most recent trip this spring.

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## Messages from Iraq: Karbala

from Cathy Breen, Karbala, Iraq, April 23, 2015

Dear Friends,

As I attempt a first writing for this trip to Iraq, Kurdistan and Turkey, I ask myself if there is a salient theme, or themes, emerging. Perhaps they would be: family, war and refugees.





I am presently in Karbala which is housing approximately 70.000 refugees, the majority from Nineveh (Mosel) and Anbar. As I traveled by car two days ago from Najaf to Karbala, the road was lined with makeshift tent-like structures, pieces of cloth to provide some privacy and shelter

Last night I attended a local home-meeting of volunteers who are trying to attend to the needs of the refugees. I was allowed to sit in to hear about the work they are coordinating. The group had been informed that I was from the U.S. and involved in humanitarian work. I introduced myself, trying to be brief. I also mentioned that I was trying to get a certain medicine for an Iraqi refugee child with cerebral palsy in Turkey. Could they help me?

*"The case you just presented is just a drop in the bucket,"* was the reply of the first gentleman to speak. *"I have a mosque with seven families, 40 people. One of their children died of thirst on the way because the Kurds would give them no water. It took them seven days to get here from Erbil."* Another said *"We have a family of orphans. The father, a soldier, was killed in Fallujah defending Sunnis. He did not receive any salary."*

I have written before how I often feel my presence in Iraq, as someone from the U.S., opens deep wounds. Last night was no exception. Although I am sure constrained out of respect, feelings of anger and indignation erupted throughout the room.

It seemed that each person wanted to have their say. And had a right to their say to someone from the United States.

- America didn't come to Iraq to protect Iraq. They are taking money for weapons, but we still don't have weapons. We have to resort to getting weapons from Russia.
- The only good thing was the taking down of Saddam Hussein.
- The U.S. opened the way for ISIS to come in.
- We are certain that the U.S. knows what is going on.
- Does anyone speak about or care about Depleted Uranium and the increase in cancer among our people?

One man said *"I have lived in Canada and visited the U.S. The people there are simple people, controlled by the media. We are not accepted when we talk because of the way we look. You are more acceptable."*

But I too wonder if anyone will listen. How can the minds and hearts of the people in the United States be reached?

On the TV yesterday there was a funeral of a soldier in the holy shrine of Imam Hussein, venerated son of Imam Ali. The funeral was being broadcast live and afterwards the scene shifted to Imams and others going to the nearby Hussein hospital to visit the bedside of wounded soldiers. I just learned that in Tikrit it took about 3 hours to go a distance of approx. 100 yards, due to bombs placed by Daash (IS) in doorways, trashcans, cars, under dead bodies, etc. In the space of one hour 18 soldiers were killed by such explosives!

One of the daughters in the family I am staying with is to be married in about two months. Her fiancé is in the army and stationed in Falluja.

In Najaf just a couple of days ago I was with the Dean of the College of Nursing. I met her last year and again in the U.S.

when she was passing through NY city with a small delegation. She was good enough to see me on very short notice, and welcomed me graciously. When just the two of us were in conversation, I asked her how things were. *"We are a country at war"* she replied. Her nephew, she said, *"like a son to me"* is in the army in Falluja and she is worried about him. I could hear the strain in her voice. And then quite unexpectedly she asked me *"Why did you come?"* I hesitated a moment and then answered *"To see you."* She seemed, as I had been, caught unawares, but at the same time genuinely pleased by the answer.



The emotions raised in last night's meeting will be with me for some time. It seems the bonds of human friendship and solidarity have been strained almost to the breaking point. And yet the mutual gratitude and warmth in our parting last night leave no doubt that these bonds still remain.

Whenever I am able to, I assure those I meet that there are countless people who come with me on this trip to bear witness to their reality, to hear their voices and convey their words at home, and to express their deep solidarity in these desperate times.

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# 4 Hancock Activists Convicted of Trespass but . . .

**FOUR HANCOCK ANTI-DRONE ACTIVISTS GUILTY OF TRESPASS, BUT ACQUITTED OF DISORDERLY CONDUCT AND OF OBSTRUCTING GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION (OGA), A MISDEMEANOR.**

***Setencing Date TBD***

This afternoon (6/27), after deliberating a couple hours, a six-person jury found the four not guilty of obstructing government administration (OGA) at Hancock Air Base near Syracuse, New York, but guilty of trespass, a violation carrying a maximum 15-day imprisonment.

Today was the last day of the four-day trial presided over by Judge Joseph Zavaglia, an attorney from East Syracuse. The four were represented by Atty. Lew Oliver of Albany. They were among 31 arrested in the driveway to Hancock's main gate on East Molloy Rd on April 28, 2013 for "dieing-in" with bloody shrouds or for attempting to read aloud to the military personnel behind Hancock's barbed wire fence a list of children killed by U.S. drones. The activists said they sought to "prick the conscience" of base personnel and the chain of command responsible for the war crime originating there.

A low point in the trial came when Judge Zavaglia did not permit Pardiss Kebraiaei, a national security and international law expert, to testify. Kebraiaei, who has testified before Congress, had come that morning from NYC where she's an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights.

Since 2010 Hancock has been the home of the 174th Attack Wing

of the NY National Guard – an MQ9 Reaper drone hub piloting weaponized drones 24/7 over Afghanistan and likely elsewhere. Also since 2010 Hancock has been the scene of twice-monthly anti-drone demonstrations outside its main gate as well as occasional larger demonstrations and scrupulously nonviolent civil resistance organized by Upstate Drone Action, a grassroots coalition. These have led to over 160 arrests, and numerous trials in DeWitt as well as \$375 fines, Orders of Protection, and numerous incarcerations.

The four defendants are:

- ~ Ellen Barfield of Baltimore
- ~ Jules Orkin of Bergenfield, NJ
- ~ Joan Pleune of Brooklyn
- ~ Beverly Rice of Manhattan

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## Prosecution Rests in Hancock Trial

**June 25, 2015, DeWitt, NY:** Four concerned citizens are on trial before Judge Joseph Zavaglia in the DeWitt Town Court for their action at Hancock Drone Base, a suburb of Syracuse, NY, on April 28, 2013. The four are Jules Orkin of Bergenfield, NJ, Ellen Barfield of Baltimore, MD, Beverly Rice, and Joan Pleune of NYC.

Jury selection was yesterday. The jury of six and two alternates, were chosen from the Town of DeWitt. One of the jurors said he thinks Edward Snowden should be executed and that weaponized drones are good.

The Assistant District Attorney, Peter Hakes started his case today, with only one witness taking the stand. After a full

day of questioning of the witness, Chief Master Sergeant Ramsey, the prosecution rested their case.

The four defendants are facing four charges, Obstruction of Governmental Administration, Trespass, and two Disorderly Conducts. If found guilty the activists could be sentenced to a year.

On April 28, 2013, 31 people were arrested as they tried to bring to the base an image of what a drone strike could look like. The defendants participated in the action.

The Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and Stop the Wars along with colleague organizations Veterans For Peace and the Granny Peace Brigade to which the defendants belong, believe the killing is immoral and illegal, violating the United Nations Charter, and international treaty laws which under Article 6 of the US Constitution are part of the supreme law of the United States and supercede local and Federal law.

Since 2010 anti-drone activists have experienced nearly 200 arrests and numerous jail sentences at Hancock for scrupulously-nonviolent protests, as part of a national campaign to resist drones at a number of bases.

The trial will continue with the defense starting it's case on Friday morning. Please come support the defendants.

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# 24 June Jury Trial in DeWitt

## Four Defendants Go On Trial 24 June at DeWitt, NY Town Court for Opposing Reaper Drone War Crimes at Hancock Air Base

At 9am, Wednesday 24 June, 2015, Ellen Barfield of Baltimore, MD, Jules Orkin of Bergenfield, NJ, Joan Pleune and Beverly Rice of New York City, defended by Attorney Lewis B. Oliver of Albany, NY, will begin trial before a six-person jury in the DeWitt, NY Town Court of Judge Zavaglia, charged with 2 counts of disorderly conduct, one count of trespass, and one count of obstructing government administration.

Over 2 years ago, on 28 April, 2013, the four were arrested with 27 others for allegedly blocking the driveway leading to the main gate of the Hancock Reaper drone base on East Molloy Rd, town of DeWitt.

The arrestees that day are members and colleagues of Upstate Drone Action, a grass-roots group which calls public attention to the killing and terrorizing of Afghan civilians by Hancock's 174th Attack Wing of the NY National Guard, and urges drone operators to examine their consciences.

Upstate Drone Action, along with colleague organizations Veterans For Peace and the Granny Peace Brigade to which the defendants belong, believe the killing is immoral and illegal, violating the United Nations Charter, and international treaty laws which under Article 6 of the US Constitution are part of the supreme law of the United States

and supersede local and Federal law.

Since 2010 anti-drone activists have experienced nearly 200 arrests and numerous jail sentences at Hancock for scrupulously-nonviolent protests, as part of a national campaign to resist drones at a number of bases.

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# Exposing Drone Terrorism: Remarks at the 2015 Left Forum

**Exposing Drone Terrorism: Remarks at the 2015 Left Forum**  
*by Ed Kinane.    Republished from Truthout.org Speakout*

I'll begin by noting that most terrorism *has not* been perpetrated by Islamic-identified people. In fact, despite the relentless deluge of publicity to the contrary, Islamic-identified people commit only a fraction of the world's terrorism.

Most terrorism is large scale. In the 20th and 21st centuries most terrorism is high tech and airborne...whether over Guernica or Dresden or Nagasaki or Hiroshima or Tokyo or Laos or Viet Nam or Baghdad or Gaza. Airborne violence primarily murders civilians. Airborne terror is shooting fish in a barrel.

In the 21st century weaponized drones are the favored instrument of this airborne terrorism. Drones are the darling of the planet's major terrorist power, the CIA/Pentagon. As yet only two nations – one Christian-identified and one



Jewish-identified – deploy weaponized drones and they do so massively.

That may be obvious to many in this room, but it's a reality monolithically obscured in US corporate media. Hence it's a reality totally *not* grasped by mainstream USA.

Drone terror is not just about the maiming and killing of civilians or about assassinations and extrajudicial executions. Nor the violation of national sovereignty nor about a superpower's contempt for international law. Nor about the deceit, clandestinity or suppression of domestic civil rights that accompany drone terror. Drone terror is also about the enduring *fear* drones generate – whether in Waziristan or rural Afghanistan or Yemen or wherever. A fear that leads *hundreds of thousands* to flee their homes and villages...except in Gaza, where, trapped in their open-air prison, few can flee. People in Gaza, living daily under the gaze of Israeli drones, endure years of trembling and despair.

The politicians and mainstream media pull off the Big Lie about who the terrorists really are when they incessantly invoke the terrorist boogiemán and virtually never define the word. They never come clean about what terrorism really is. They never explain that terrorism isn't a function one's color of skin or of one's cultural identity, but that *terrorism is none other than violence – or the threat of violence – directed at civilians for political or military ends.*

The politicians and mainstream media would convince us that terrorism is exclusively what others do, never what US forces do. These media pimps ignore the intent and effects of such US high tech terror devices as Cruise missiles or Agent Orange or landmines or depleted uranium or napalm or white phosphorus or cluster bombs...or the US nuclear arsenal.

The media don't tell us that drones, with their Hellfire missiles and 500 lb. bombs, dismember and incinerate human

beings with far less “precision” than any ISIS beheading.

I mention *fear*. The corollary of fear is *cowardice*. Terrorism, especially airborne terrorism, is cowardly. In those demolished cities and besieged regions I cited above, there’s little or no capacity to shoot back. The killer/victim ratio is obscene. For example, in the Gaza invasions, the kill ratio is about 100 to one. Gaza is the barrel; Gazans are the fish.

Drone operators, whether in Israel or in the US, are totally safe; totally riskless, doing their dirty work tens or hundreds or thousands of miles away from those they incinerate or dismember. The drone crew – godlike – stands outside the barrel, killing in comfort, in ergonomic chairs, on shift, during precise hours, a daily commute from their spouses and kids, a few miles along paved roads from their TVs, their refrigerators, their air conditioning, their plumbing.

In Central New York where I hail from, the Hancock killer drone base hosts the 174th *Attack Wing* of the New York State National Guard. At Hancock, the drone operators and their chain of command are enclosed by a high barbed wire fence and heavily armed guards. As if such force protection isn’t enough, the base commanders have somehow gotten both DeWitt Town judges to issue *Orders of Protection* against scrupulously nonviolent anti-drone activists. Such Orders of Protection forbid us to even approach those fences or those guards.

The irony is that these Orders of Protection – a legal device designed to protect abused spouses and kids – facilitate the slaughter of innocents in Afghanistan. Those Orders choke our First Amendment right to petition the Government for a redress of our grievance re the war crime done in our name and with our tax dollars.

Over the years in various articles and in various forums, my mantra has been: *Drones are tactically clever, but strategically stupid*. Typically I go on to discuss the

blowback that weaponized drones generate. And I note the proliferation thanks, in part, to US and Israeli export of drones. I point out that the day may not be far off when drone terror is also used against domestic foes of the US power structure, the likely victims being minorities or dissidents or legal demonstrators or simply those out of favor with the reigning party or security apparatus. Drones, like chickens, are coming home to roost. (The White House ought not to forget that one day it too may become a drone target. That prospect might keep any reluctant president doing the industrial/military complex's bidding.)

But now I realize that my mantra, Drones are tactically clever, but strategically stupid, is over-simple. It fails to tell us who suffers and who gains from strategic stupidity. For those currently monopolizing drone weaponry, drones are a kind of miracle...at least in the short term.

When it deploys weaponized drones, alienating whole swaths of humanity, the Pentagon surely loses any battle for "hearts and minds." But there's method to the madness. All that drone-inspired hatred toward the US serves a useful purpose: like US arms sales and arms transfers to volatile regions, drones keep the pot boiling. This keeping-the-pot-boiling disaster capitalism is gravy for corporations seeking overseas resources, cheaper labor or international markets. And especially so for those – like Bechtel or Boeing or Lockheed or General Atomics – who buy Congress and suck up lucrative Pentagon contracts. For many, drones are exciting and miraculous. After all, drones promise to promote US capitalist world dominance.

And to do so on the cheap.

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Now, our panel this morning seeks to generate discussion on how we might expose and oppose drone terrorism. What I bring

to the conversation is several years' experience of resistance to one specific weaponized drone base just outside my hometown, Syracuse, New York, but Hancock is only one of several US drone bases attracting persistent anti-drone resistance. Others include Beale in California, Creech in Nevada and Whiteman in Missouri. And now there's the campaign against the US drone signal relay station at Ramstein AFB, Germany, heating up.

Hancock, a former F-16 airbase, now is an MQ9 Reaper hub. Since 2010, Hancock has been operating the Reaper hunter/killer drone over Afghanistan 24/7. We suspect Hancock targets other countries as well.

In 2009, our grassroots group, the Upstate Drone Action Coalition – also sometimes called Ground the Drones and End the Wars – began demonstrating there at least twice a month. Our campaign – inspired by Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King and by Fr. Roy Bourgeois of School of the Americas Watch – uses an ensemble of tactics. These include actions at the base that risk, and thus far have always resulted in, arrest. As of 2015, we've had over 160 arrests.

Upstate Drone Action perpetrates a range of direct actions right outside Hancock's main gate. Beforehand all participants read out loud together and sign our Nonviolent Pledge. So far there have been ten or a dozen such actions with ensuing trials. On one occasion, 31 of us were arrested, and on another, 38.

With each action we go to the gate and try to deliver to the chain of command our People's Indictment of Hancock War Crimes – co-authored by former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark. More recently we have also tried to submit to the guards a People's Order of Protection on behalf of Afghan children.

Our documents being rebuffed by the guards, we then "die-in" – sometimes wrapped in bloody shrouds – blocking the base

entrance. In October 2012, we blocked all three Hancock entrances. Last March 19, to block the entrance, we used several seven-foot high, three-dimensional cardboard “big books” (including the UN Charter; the NYU/Stanford report, *Living Under Drones*; and Jeremy Scahill’s *Dirty Wars*).

Uniformed DeWitt Town police, Onondaga County sheriffs and New York State troopers arrive and arrest us. No soldiers perform arrests, nor have there been any federal charges. So far there’s been no rough stuff.

We’re charged in the DeWitt Town court variously with trespass, disturbing the peace, and obstructing government administration. Those allegedly violating their Order of Protection are charged with contempt of court – a misdemeanor allowing for a jury trial, of which we have had several. But mostly, after long delays, we have bench trials. Often we go *pro se*, i.e. defend ourselves, the better to speak from our hearts and put drone terrorism itself on trial.

The two DeWitt Town judges – defying international law and the Sixth Article of the US Constitution making such law the supreme law of the land – are determined to deter us from further actions at Hancock. So, for recidivists – some of us having been arrested five and six times – the judges multiply hoops and escalate penalties. At arraignments, the judges have imposed \$10,000 bail on a couple of our people – a punitive absurdity since none of us miss an opportunity to return to court.

Mostly we’ve been fined \$375 – the max for trespass – which some of us refuse to pay and instead divert to a peace group in Afghanistan. Some of us are sentenced to 15 days in the local slammer. One 79 year-old spent two months in prison; one grandmother, now out on appeal, got a year’s sentence – which, happily, led to a spate of publicity...at least overseas and in movement media.

We call our trials “court witness”; we call doing time “prison witness.” Our actions aren’t civil disobedience, but rather *civil resistance* – because we’re not disobeying law, but trying to enforce law. As we see it, doing time is a trifle compared to the price paid by those living – and dying – under drones.

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# The Shortcomings of Washington Policy Recommendations

## Drone Warriors and Warfare: The Shortcomings of Washington Policy Recommendations

by **Ed Kinane**, *RePublished from Truthout.org*

The author examines a recently-released study from the US Government Accountability Office, titled: “Unmanned Aerial Systems: Actions Needed to Improve DOD Pilot Training.” Below is a summary of his conclusions.

- This two-page document is bloodless. It fails to acknowledge the sheer shamelessness and cowardice of drone assassination and other such robotic killing.
- The document fails to indicate real world consequences of insufficient training (accident rate, pilot PTSD, trigger happy strikes, illegal killings, maimings, etc.).

- The document fails to indicate reasons for drone pilot shortage. These include:
  1. The expanded drone use under President Obama in Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, etc. beyond “legitimate” declared wars, and
  2. although the document fails to mention it, according to some reports, there are low drone operator re-enlistment rates. It might be useful to compare such re-enlistment rates with (say) that of manned aircraft pilots.
  
- Reasons for low re-enlistment and turnover of experienced drone operators include:
  1. Poor working conditions (long hours, staff shortages, isolated, clandestine work environment).
  2. The lack of glory, adventure, prestige and “sexiness” of operating drones, as compared to piloting manned aircraft.
  3. PTSD and “moral injury” – the sheer immorality and cowardice of assassination – especially remote and riskless assassination.
  4. Although military training generally, and drone training specifically, “robotizes” military personnel, many recruits retain their humanity and many surely listen to their consciences. Unlike (say) F-16 pilots, weaponized drone operators see the dismemberment and incineration of their targets (and non-targets) up close.
  
- Another reason for low re-enlistment may be the persistent anti-drone civil resistance at Creech Air Force Base, Whiteman Air Force Base, Beale Air Force Base, Hancock Air Force Base and elsewhere. Such nonviolent resistance has led to many arrests, trials and even incarcerations, to say nothing of publicity, both local and international. Here in central New York

(near Syracuse), Upstate Drone Action, a grassroots coalition, has been persistently demonstrating outside the Hancock main gate since 2010. We demonstrate from 4:15pm to 5pm at shift change on the first and third Tuesdays of every month. Our signs have messages like "DRONES = TERRORISM," "DRONES FLY, CHILDREN DIE," "STOP HANCOCK WAR CRIME," "ABOLISH WEAPONIZED DRONES," etc. We may never know what impact seeing such signs has on drone personnel (and family members) who drive in and out of the base.

- Besides the expansion of weaponized drone use beyond declared wars, there is the seemingly inevitable expansion of surveillance drone use throughout the US and elsewhere. US police departments (already increasingly militarized) and intelligence agencies have begun to deploy surveillance and crowd control drones, but the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires that their operators be licensed and have some minimum training, which, typically, the US military would provide.
- *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, points out that 98 percent of humans are repelled by having to kill, and so need to be trained and de-sensitized to do so. Is "insufficient training" a euphemism for the problem of insufficient indoctrination and de-sensitization? Does the "insufficient training" problem lead to the drone operators being insufficiently robotized, so that when they kill, they have moral qualms leading to PTSD and to refusal to re-enlist?
- Lastly, what should be done about the "problem?"
  1. Demand that the US military use lethal drones only in "legal" declared wars.
  2. Demand that the US prohibit the use warrant-less drones domestically for general, systematized, NSA-like surveillance.
  3. Work to ultimately abolish lethal drones



worldwide.

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# Dead Syrian Children and Drones on the Wing

## Dead Syrian Children and Drones on the Wing

*by Judy Bello rePosted from The Deconstructed Globe*

Recently the Pentagon admitted to killing two Syrian children in a drone attack last fall when they bombed a group of al Qaeda fighters in the suburbs of the Syrian city of Aleppo. Someone from the press asked me if I thought this was a sign of increasing transparency. A few of my remarks were quoted in the ensuing article, which I have linked at the end of this one. What follows is my full response.

Recently the Pentagon admitted to killing two Syrian children in a drone attack last fall when they bombed a group of al Qaeda fighters in the suburbs of the Syrian city of Aleppo. At the time they claimed this group was a critical target because they were high level operatives associated with Al Qaeda who were planning attacks on the United States mainland.. No one that I know had ever heard of this group, but their name, Khorasan, is the name of a province in Iran, which is an odd choice for an Al Qaeda affiliate. So they bombed this small group of 50 or less foreigners, holed up in a suburb of Aleppo, Syria, in a civilian neighborhood in the middle of a war zone, plotting to kill Americans in America. It is a stretch to to wrap the mind around this rather incredible story.,

But, it isn't a surprise that some children were killed in 

Syria in a drone strike. In fact, children are regularly killed in U.S. drone strikes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen and wherever. In 2013, due to a lot of negative attention brought by International Human Rights NGOs and the United Nations on drone killings in Pakistan and Yemen, President Obama produced a document that set standards limiting drone strikes where civilians might be present. Last year, after declaring war on ISIS in Syria and Iraq, he waived those limits. Soon thereafter, these children were killed by a U.S. drone strike in Syria. The picture is actually of some other children killed by drone strikes in Syria. Now, there is once again discussion of placing limits on drone strikes.


This is all very amusing, but not very helpful. In fact, any kind of military strike likely to harm uncounted (but certain to be present) civilians is a violation of international humanitarian law. The U.S. government wants to bend the definitions to allow us to have these unconventional non-state wars, but it doesn't want to accept the limits that, in old fashioned wars, were enforced by the existence of a battlefield where civilians would not be likely to be present. But we no longer fight under the formal procedures of interstate war which both require and demand boundaries.

☒ War is the name we now use for global policing, which has not boundaries as far as the United States is concerned, but which is governed by international human rights law, which is even more stringent in its protection of civilians than humanitarian law, or the laws governing war.. So, why are we, the people, the dissatisfied populace, the defenders of peace and justice,, asking for transparency rather than justice under the law? Why should we respect fluctuating assertions of compliance or noncompliance by serial violators as new law? The result is an endless buzz of discussion around a line that is already deep in civilian territory and wholly

outside the law. No one is safe in a war zone that is not and cannot be defined. Endless dribbles of transparency in a constantly redefined context have no substance.

In revealing the latest transgression, focusing our attention on the deaths of these children and whatever remedies President Obama might choose to put in place, the Pentagon is covering for something larger and creating a cover story that it can use to have an appearance of transparency. The tragic deaths of these 2 children are just a drop in the bucket of casualties from US airstrikes in countries our leaders wish to control.. When they choose to target groups that are 'bunkered' in civilian areas, even when they are legitimate targets – and that isn't always the case – the strikes are bound to hit civilian targets. This war is not being fought on a battlefield but in the cities and villages of Syria. The fact that these deaths occurred in this brazenly illegitimate context has been forgotten. There are only these children.

At the time these children died, there were other stories in the alternative press about civilian casualties of U.S. strikes in the vicinity of Raqqa. Notably, there were strikes on a grain silo which stored precious food for the civilians living in this desert city, and another instance where a US strike on a compound targeted a Da'ish prison, killing a large number of 'prisoners-of-war' being held by a handful of Da'ish guards. Strikes on Da'ish targets in the city Raqqa were fruitless because Da'ish had abandoned their urban headquarters for civilians neighborhoods in the suburbs of the city. So, armed U.S. drones followed with the expectable consequence of civilian deaths.

Words like 'building' and 'compound' cover up the reality  that the buildings and compounds are homes, schools, places of business and the structures of ordinary social living. Just because the children aren't playing in the street during a war doesn't mean they aren't present. Not every gathering

of men is a militia. As I learned in Pakistan, the women we don't see are generally in kitchens attached to the public areas where the men meet, and which are primary drone targets. This war is taking place in the cities and towns of Syrian, not on a battlefield. It is impossible that U.S. military and government decision makers don't know this.

In modern wars, which are largely fought in the cities and villages of someone's country, there is no way to entirely avoid a vast number of civilian casualties, usually more in number than the combatant casualties. Combatants are paying attention, and often protected by their weapons and armored vehicles and so on. Civilians have no protection. This is one reason why starting and fueling these wars is such a heinous crime.

The Syrian Arab Army and their allies consistently attempt to evacuate the sites of battles before engaging the enemy. They have the information to do this because they are part of the local society. Yet western news sources generally paint them as psychopathic murderers. The US strikes are based on abstract intelligence; video feedback from drones a couple of miles in the air, satellite imagery that can only pick out certain types of physical material and temperature gradients and radio signals, and information provided by spies on the ground who often have agendas separate from US interests. The information is evaluated by people with little understanding of the local context. So that information is not complete and may be very misleading. The guys with the joysticks know this. Their bosses know this. Yet they fire anyway. Who are the real psychopathic killers?

To lessen the risk of civilian casualties the US would have to coordinate with the Syrian government and the Syrian Arab Army and their allies who have reliable information about civilians on the ground. They would also have to rethink some of their surveillance and weapons deliveries. Some percentage of weapons are delivered directly to Da'ish and Jabhat al Nusra

forces on the ground, and many more are delivered to areas and organizations they can easily control and co-opt. Then our barbarism could be reduced to the level of the Syrian Arab Army loyal to Bashar Assad, who are doing their best to preserve their county and protect their countrymen.

And yes, other instances have occurred where the United States has admitted deadly errors. This is part of a shell game that engages people to look at small disturbing details while the broad pattern of abuse remains invisible. People receive apologies and expend their outrage. Such revelations do cause outrage among activists and others, but since it is no mystery to those who are informed, and explained to those who aren't, they do not incite further analysis and discussion. The truth is that The U.S. violates International laws of war and peace on a regular basis, day in and week out, month in and year out, while the world vacillates around a fruitless discussion of transparency, as if the truth is irrelevant until after a liar confesses.



Meanwhile, even as U.S. forces are focused on surveilling these civilian neighborhoods where 'enemy' forces might be set up under civilian cover, they apparently don't take the trouble to surveil areas where these

forces are in the process of vanquishing or have recently vanquished local forces. After pretty much every victory, Da'ish has a celebratory parade, often transporting weapons not only through the city, but across the desert for long distances as they redistribute their resources. Surely these events are visible on satellite surveillance, but none of these caravans have ever been struck by U.S. forces. Also, there appears to be no US surveillance on the Turkish border with Syria or the Israeli border, both of which are the locus of known supply lines for Da'ish and Al Nusra. These facts

have been known, literally for years.

Additionally, U.S. proxies are feeding al Qaeda, ISIS and the foreign Jihadis in Syria and Iraq, while the U.S. makes a show of fighting them. What isn't obvious, what the broader citizenry turns away from, is that there would be no necessity of anyone bombing anywhere if the US would focus it's substantial economic and political power on blocking it's allies from supporting these groups it then bombs in the towns and cities of Syria and Iraq.

Turkey is the middle man, profiting from the sale of Da'ish oil, and also a transit hub for foreign fighters. It allows border crossings to be openly controlled by Da'ish and Al Nusra fighters, who use these crossings as supply routes and for troop movement. Turkey hosts training camps for the incoming jihadis, and there is some indication that the US Base at Incirlik is involved in this project. Foreign fighters fly into Istanbul and can be seen on public transportation in the city as they make their way to the training camps and the Syrian border.

Israel is providing logistical support to al Nusra fighters in the Golan, including supply routes and medical support. Israel also bombs Syrian government sites periodically. They not only bomb government military sites, but recently have attacked Iranian and Hezbollah fighters in the region. Binyamin Netanyahu has been photographed visiting wounded Al Nusra fighters in an Israeli hospital.

Jordan also hosts training camps.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar and other oil rich Emirates have been funding both al Nusra and Da'ish fighters. Qatar has been providing salaries to Syrian Muslim Brotherhood members to induce them to take up arms against their government since 2011. Both countries are home to wealthy donors who fund transportation and payroll for fighters in Syria, and provide

weapons and training to them. Powerful satellite news organizations, Al Jazeera and Al Arabia, owned by members of the royal families of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, provide political cover for the ongoing wars and popularize or normalize vicious sectarian points of view.

The US does nothing to contain any of these activities. Instead it supports them with weapons and diplomatic cover.

The tragic deaths of 2 children provide us with a glimpse of a much larger tragedy, The United States and its allies have the Syrian government and the Syrian people enmeshed in a war that they did not initiate, and which they cannot end because it is fueled by an endless supply of men and resources coming from outside the country. Many more men women and children have died in this senseless war to undermine the sovereignty of Syria, and we can expect that they will continue to die as long as those forces continue to prevail in the region.

The U.S. also continues to use weaponized drones for so called targeted killings in civilian areas of countries whose governments we are not at war with, and that includes Afghanistan. Targeted killing target so called 'militants' – if they were 'combatants' they would have some rights under International law – in their homes, mosques and marketplaces where it is unsurprising to find them surrounded by women, children and other civilians who have nothing to do with the so called wars in the context of which they are being targeted.

Sputnik article based on the original interview: US Lacks Transparency on Drone Policy Despite Children's Deaths

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# 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

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.

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May 26, 2015

Her Excellency Dr. Angela Merkel  
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany  
Bundeskansleramt  
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. drones 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 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 Reprieve will appeal on behalf of the Yemeni plaintiffs as soon as the full written decision of the court in Cologne is available.