

Demand for 'Moratorium on Drone Warfare' Follows Latest US Killing of Afghan Civilians

by *Jake Johnson*, published on *Common Dreams*, August 30, 2021

The largest Muslim civil rights organization in the United States demanded Monday that the Biden administration immediately put in place a “*moratorium on drone warfare*” after the U.S. killed at least 10 Afghan civilians—including half a dozen children—with an airstrike in Kabul over the weekend.

“*Enough is enough*,” Edward Ahmed Mitchell, national deputy director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), said in a statement.

“For more than ten years, our government’s drone strikes have killed thousands of innocent people in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and elsewhere in the Muslim world—destroying family homes, wedding parties, and even funeral processions. The civilian casualties in Kabul are simply the latest victims of this misused technology.”

Mitchell said the Biden administration should impose a temporary moratorium on the U.S. drone program—which is largely shrouded in secrecy—“*until the government establishes strict oversight rules that would prevent these tragedies by severely limiting and transparently accounting for our military’s use of drone warfare.*”

According to press reports and accounts from relatives and witnesses, the 10 people reportedly killed by the U.S. airstrike in Kabul on Sunday were all members of a single

extended family—and at least three of the child victims were girls just two years old or younger.

“This is the latest in 20 years of innocent lives taken and children orphaned in Afghanistan and covert drone warfare around the world,”

Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) said Monday.

“Impunity for these attacks continues to create a never-ending cycle of violence and retribution. Where should these victims go to seek justice?”

The Biden administration has yet to take responsibility for killing the civilians with its drone strike, which purportedly targeted an explosive-laden vehicle that the U.S. military claims ISIS-K was planning to use in another attack on Kabul’s international airport.

“The U.S. went into Afghanistan seeking revenge and bombing civilians,”

Medea Benjamin, co-founder of the anti-war group CodePink, tweeted Monday.

“Twenty years later, the U.S. is leaving Afghanistan seeking revenge and bombing civilians.”

Maj. Gen. Hank Taylor, deputy director of the U.S. Joint Staff for Regional Operations, said during a press briefing on Monday that the Pentagon is “aware” of reports of civilian deaths in Kabul and that an investigation is underway.

In a statement, Amnesty International USA executive director

Paul O'Brien said that the Biden administration *"has a responsibility to the families of those killed to name the dead, acknowledge its actions, investigate, and provide reparations."*

The Pentagon is notorious for dramatically undercounting the number of civilians killed in U.S. military operations overseas. And when the U.S. government does admit to killing civilians, it often refuses to provide any compensation to the victims' families.

"The United States has been killing civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and Somalia for years, under the guise of the so-called 'war on terror,' with impunity,"

said O'Brien.

"For two decades, the United States has carried out strikes with no accountability to the public for how many civilians were killed."

The latest airstrike in Kabul, O'Brien argued, could be

"a glimpse into the future U.S. involvement in Afghanistan if the Biden administration pushes ahead with an 'over the horizon' counter-terrorism program that does not prioritize civilian protection."

Earlier this year, the Biden administration quietly implemented temporary restrictions on drone strikes outside of *"conventional battlefield zones"* such as Afghanistan. But such limits did not stop U.S. military's Africa Command (AFRICOM) from launching a lethal drone strike in Somalia in July, the first attack on that country of Joe Biden's presidency.

As the withdrawal of U.S. troops continues apace ahead of the August 31 exit deadline, it appears that Biden is prepared to

keep carrying out drone strikes in Afghanistan in the future. In a statement Friday after the U.S. launched a drone strike targeting two “*planners and facilitators*” of the deadly attack on Kabul’s airport, Biden declared, “*This strike was not the last.*”

***Featured Image:** *Relatives and neighbors of the Ahmadi family gathered around the incinerated husk of a vehicle hit by a U.S. drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan on August 30, 2021. (Photo: Marcus Yam/Los Angeles Times)*

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