

February 19, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

cc: All Members of Congress
re: CIA drone strikes

Dear Members of Congress:

As members of the American faith community, we believe that all people have human rights given to us by God, and that there must be transparency and accountability regarding the use of lethal force undertaken on our behalf. Therefore we are writing to ask you to end the CIA's use of armed drones to carry out lethal attacks.

The CIA's use of drones to target and kill suspected militants began in 2004 and has continued through three Administrations. Reports indicate that the CIA's program of drone strikes has expanded in the past two years to include strikes in Libya and Afghanistan. This is in addition to the CIA's long term program of carrying out strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, and possibly other countries. These strikes amount to a secret war, one that now spreads across at least four countries. There has never been a robust public or congressional debate over this war. In most cases it isn't even officially acknowledged - despite being common knowledge in the affected countries.

Democracies must debate and take moral responsibility for decisions to use violent force. By refusing to acknowledge most of its strikes, the CIA prevents civilian victims from receiving justice and conveys moral responsibility for killing on to an American people who have never been informed about this secret war, nor had their Members of Congress vote on it.

Drones pose a unique risk for policy-makers in that they lower many of the perceived costs to the use of force and thus lower the threshold for war. By separating American personnel from direct physical risk, drones antisepticise killing, removing both policy-makers and every-day Americans from understanding the true moral and emotional costs of taking life. The CIA program compounds this problem by making secret an already morally fraught decision to kill.

We encourage you to focus on nonviolent solutions to conflict, including diplomacy, institution-building, and humanitarian assistance. Throughout three Administrations, the CIA has been used to carry out a seemingly endless covert war without formal congressional authorization or public debate. Congress should end this secret war by ending the CIA's authority to carry out drone strikes.

Sincerely,

Presbyterian Church (USA)

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

National Council of Churches

Franciscan Action Network

Church of the Brethren

Sisters of Charity, BVM

Alliance of Baptists

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC)

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Center on Conscience & War

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare

Coalition for Peace Action

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

South East Asian Faith Initiatives

Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Disciples Center for Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)

Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Unitarian Universalist Association, United Nations Office

American Friends Service Committee

Pax Christi USA