

Human Rights and Drone Strikes—An Advocacy Issue

Established on the basis of human rights, America laid out its governance to secure and observe such rights, and continues to take its stance for a wide range of rights. Wide News coverage brings to light many instances of violations of rights, which raise demands to end violations and put things “to rights”.

And yet our nation has let itself be drawn into actions which in the grossest way deny the most essential human rights. Strikes by drone aircraft continue to cause excessive casualties—unjustified denials of life itself—among civilian populations, distantly guided by operators with technology that fails to positively distinguish civilians from enemies in many instances.

Use of drones supposedly protects civilian populations by avoiding deployment of massive numbers of ground forces which could lead to more widespread conflict and hazards to civilians. But reports of civilian casualties continue, and humanitarian sense summons us to protest the loss of lives and human rights. To cease all drone strikes in any region of civilian populations is a step which the US could well undertake, on its own initiative, to protect human rights, most essentially the Right to Life.

NATO Secretary-General Rasmussen has lauded US participation in joint ventures such as the protests in Libya where US actions were limited to aerial support of the protestors’ ground forces. Aerial support could mean drone strikes but Rasmussen, mindful of the costliness and destruction of military measures, has advised that future actions of the sort should be more widely multi-national, and use means other than military to provide support for such ventures in the future.

A special day for observance of human rights was established years ago as an international occasion to raise up human rights and for rededication to safeguarding and promoting them. As that appointed date is soon to come again in December, we of the peace communities could well mark it with calls to end the use of drone craft and strikes as a further advance to take for human rights, in a way effective beyond our usual assertions of the importance of those rights. Can we take that call into messages to our nation’s leaders, for an enlightened stance such as our nation needs for its defense, as well as in the ways by which we assist others abroad?

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