

## A FEW OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF ENDLESS WAR

On August 29, 10 members of the Ahmadi family, seven of them children, were killed by a U.S. drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan. While initially stating that the attack assassinated an “Islamic State extremist,” the Pentagon admitted in September that only civilians were killed. “The strike was a tragic mistake,” Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, told the press, offering apologies to the victims’ family and suggesting that the United States was “considering” giving them reparations payments. In early November, an “independent Pentagon review” concluded that the strike “was not caused by misconduct or negligence,” but that it was a mistake which happened “despite prudent measures to prevent civilian deaths.” The review did not recommend any disciplinary action. It merely remarked that there were “breakdowns in communication and in the process of identifying and confirming the target of the bombing.” (*“Watchdog finds no misconduct in air strike,” Associated Press, 11/03/2021.*)

Euphemisms aside, what this means is that one branch of the Pentagon investigated another for causing unintended casualties as the result of drone warfare and essentially decided that the mistake was an unfortunate by-product of a usual day’s work that did not go quite as planned.

**This strike in Afghanistan gives us a small window into the methods and consequences of the war that the U.S. government is waging daily in our names, and the sense of normalcy with which its architects regard it.** So does the air strike on Baghuz, Syria in 2019, which killed an estimated 60 civilians and whose previously successful cover-up was revealed by the New York Times last week. (*“How the U.S. Hid an Air Strike that Killed Dozens of Civilians in Syria,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/13/us/us-airstrikes-civilian-deaths.html>.*)

**But these “incidents” are just the tip of the iceberg.** In the past 20 years, U.S. drone strikes alone in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan have caused thousands of deaths among non-combatants, the full extent of which still remain unknown despite valiant attempts by watchdog groups, whistleblowers and NGOs to document them with no help from the government and little, in general, from the mainstream media. Many of them have thus gone unreported or underreported. (And the whistleblowers have been prosecuted and sentenced to prison terms. See <https://reason.com/2021/10/12/a-drone-whistleblower-goes-to-prison/>, regarding the case of Daniel Hale.)

**This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century face of endless war: anonymous killing by remote control, off the radar of most of us although it is being done by our own government. The consequences for the immediate victims**

**are obvious. Survivors face less visible but deeply scarring outcomes.** Indeed, Jessica Wolfendale, Professor and Chair of Philosophy at Marquette University, argues that “drone warfare is a form of terrorism when drones are used in ways that cause foreseeable civilian deaths and injuries and inflict indiscriminate and devastating psychological trauma on everyone subjected to drone surveillance and targeting.” (See <https://inkstickmedia.com/when-drone-warfare-is-terrorism/>.)

**The role of drone operators as virtual warriors facing no physical danger themselves is unprecedented.** Studies of post-traumatic stress disorder among them are necessarily in their infancy but a certain percentage (estimated at about 4% now) are already suffering from PTSD. Surely the cumulative psychological toll of witnessing daily the devastating results of their work and decisions will have a long-term impact on their mental and spiritual health and, by extension, on their families and loved ones, that we cannot yet even begin to predict. (See, for example, <https://www.npr.org/2017/04/24/525413427/for-drone-pilots-warfare-may-be-remote-but-the-trauma-is-real>.)

**And what of us if we remain silent?** Historically, U.S. citizens who have learned the truth of wars being fought and war crimes committed in our names have struggled to end them, with some success. This is a crucial time to work for peace and justice on all fronts. We cannot possibly achieve a decent society while our nation is inflicting this kind of damage on the rest of the world. Please, learn as much as possible about these wars that the policymakers would prefer you didn’t concern yourself with, and act to help stop them.

### ***RESIST THIS ENDLESS WAR!***

#### **New Haven Sunday Vigil for Peace and Justice**

Join the conversation here, 12-1 PM every Sunday; Broadway, Park and Elm  
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