

Lawsuit Challenging Targeted Drone Killings of American Citizens

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Region: [USA](#)

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In December 2012, the US lawyers for Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, and other federal officials sued 'in their individual capacities', [asked a federal judge to dismiss a lawsuit](#) over the killing of three American citizens in drone strikes in Yemen earlier that year.



We covered the hearing [in July](#) in some detail but, as mainstream media appear to have lost interest in the case, 18 pages of Google were searched before finally establishing the current status of the February 2013 motion to block the case filed on behalf of Nasser Aulaki by the [American Civil Liberties Union and the Center for Constitutional Rights](#). This alleged that the U.S. government's 2011 killings in the Yemen of U.S. citizens Anwar Al-Aulaqi, Samir Khan, and 16-year-old Abdulrahman Al-Aulaqi, a 16-year-old boy born in Denver, violated the Constitution's fundamental guarantee against the deprivation of life without due process of law.

The killings were said to have been part of a broader program of "targeted killing" by the United States, outside the context of armed conflict, the program based on vague legal standards, a closed executive decision-making process, and the evidence never presented to the courts, even after the killing.



In July 2013, a federal district court in Washington, D.C., 'heard oral argument' – see [contemporary video comment](#). [The New York Times reported](#) that Judge Rosemary M. Collyer, hearing the case, asked Brian Hauck, a deputy assistant attorney general a series of rhetorical questions – most pointedly:

"Are you saying that a U.S. citizen targeted by the United States in a foreign country has no constitutional rights? How broadly are you asserting the right of the United States to target an American citizen? Where is the limit to this?" She provided her own answer to the last one: "The limit is the courthouse door."

The outcome: "We await the court's decision", was confirmed on Sunday, 27 October 2013 by Jameel Jaffer, [in the Nation](#), a Sri Lankan newspaper: the case is still 'pending'.

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