

Why There Should Be a Treaty Against the Use of Weaponized Drones

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Citizen activism to bring about changes in how brutal wars are conducted is extremely difficult, but not impossible. Citizens have successfully pushed through the United Nations General Assembly treaties to abolish nuclear weapons and to ban the use of landmines and cluster munitions.

Of course, countries that want to continue to use these weapons will not follow the lead of the vast majority of countries in the world and sign those treaties. The United States and the other eight nuclear armed countries have refused to sign the treaty to abolish nuclear weapons. Likewise, [the United States and 15 other countries](#), including Russia and China, have refused to sign the ban on the use cluster bombs. [The United States and 31 other countries](#), including Russia and China, have refused to sign the treaty on the ban on land mines.

However, the fact that "rogue," war mongering countries, such as the United States, refuse to sign treaties that the majority of the countries of the world want, does not deter people of conscience and social responsibility from trying to bring these countries to their senses for the sake of the survival of the human species.

We know that we are up against rich weapons manufacturers that buy the favor of politicians in these war nations through their political campaign donations and other largesse.

Up against these odds, the latest citizen initiative for banning a specific weapon of war will be launched on June 10, 2023 in Vienna, Austria at the [International Summit for Peace in Ukraine](#).

One of the favorite weapons of war of the 21st century has turned out to be weaponized

unmanned aerial vehicles. With these automated aircraft, human operators can be tens of thousands of miles away watching from cameras onboard the plane. No human must be on the ground to verify what the operators think they see from the plane which may be thousands of feet above.

As a result of imprecise data analysis by the drone operators, thousands of innocent civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Gaza, Ukraine and Russia have been slaughtered by the Hellfire missiles and other munitions triggered by the drone operators. Innocent civilians attending wedding parties and funeral gatherings have been massacred by drone pilots. Even those coming to aid victims of a first drone strike have been killed in what is called “double tap.”

Many militaries around the world are now following the lead of the United States in the use of killer drones. The U.S. used weaponized drones in Afghanistan and Iraq and killed thousands of innocent citizens of those countries.

By using weaponized drones, militaries don't have to have humans on the ground to confirm targets or to verify that the persons killed were the intended targets. For militaries, drones are a safe and easy way to kill their enemies. The innocent civilians killed can be chalked up as “collateral damage” with seldom an investigation into how the intelligence that led to the killing of the civilians was created. If by chance an investigation is done, drone operators and intelligence analysts are given a pass on responsibility for extra-judicially assassinating innocent civilians.

One of the most recent and most publicized drone strike on innocent civilians was in the city of Kabul, Afghanistan in August 2021, during the botched U.S. evacuation from Afghanistan. After following a white car for hours that intelligence analysts reportedly believed to be carrying a possible ISIS-K bomber, a U.S. drone operator launched a Hellfire missile at the car as it pulled into a small residential compound. At the same moment, seven small children came racing out to the car to ride the remaining distance into the compound.

While senior U.S. military initially described the deaths of unidentified persons as a “righteous” drone strike, as media investigated who was killed by the drone strike, it turned out that the driver of the car was Zemari Ahmadi, an employee of Nutrition and Education International, a California-based aid organization who was making his daily routine of deliveries of materials to various locations in Kabul.

When he arrived home each day, his children would run out of the house to meet their father and ride in the car the remaining few feet to where he would park. [3 adults and 7 children were killed](#) in what was later confirmed as an “unfortunate” attack on innocent civilians. No military personnel were admonished or punished for the mistake that killed ten innocent persons.

Over the past 15 years, I have made trips to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Gaza to talk with families who have had innocent loved ones killed by drone pilots who were operating drones from hundreds if not thousands of miles away. The stories are similar. The drone pilot and the intelligence analysts, generally young men and women in their 20s, misinterpreted a situation that could have been sorted out easily by “boots on the ground.”

But the military finds it easier and safer to kill innocent civilians than put its own personnel on the ground to make on site evaluations. Innocent persons will continue to die until we

find a way to stop the use of this weapons system. The risks will increase as AI takes over more and more of the targeting and launch decisions.

The draft treaty is a first step in the uphill battle to rein in long distance and increasingly automated and weaponized drone warfare.

Please join us in the International Campaign to Ban Weaponized Drones and [sign the petition/statement](#) which we will present in Vienna in June and ultimately take to the United Nations.

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