A Statement on Drone Strikes

The Gathering of the Alliance of Baptists in Greenville, S.C., April 6, 2013

In our Alliance of Baptists Covenant and Mission Statement, we commit ourselves to work for peace and to work with people of other faiths in doing so. Supporting the work of Drones Watch is one way to fulfill that pledge. As a coalition campaign to monitor and regulate the proliferation of lethal unmanned aerial vehicles, Drones Watch has developed a petition regarding this issue which reads as follows:

As representatives of faith-based communities, we are deeply concerned about the proliferation of lethal unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones. The United States is leading the way in this new form of warfare where pilots in US bases kill people, by remote control, thousands of miles away. Drones have become the preferred weapons to conduct war due to the lack of direct risk to the lives of U.S. soldiers, but these drone strikes have led to the death of hundreds of innocent civilians in countries where we are not at war, including Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.

**Some aspects that we find particularly disturbing include:**

- The President and his aides draw up a Kill List in which they play the role of prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner. People on this secret Kill List have never been charged, tried or convicted in a court of law, and are given no opportunity to surrender;
- The labeling of all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants, thus justifying their murder, is an extreme and macabre form of profiling;
- Drone strikes kill not only their intended targets, but innocent people, including children, violating the sanctity of human life;
- Drone strikes violate other nations’ sovereignty (Pakistan’s elected leaders, for example, have repeatedly called for an end to the strikes);
- Drones in the hands the CIA and the Joint Special Operations Command keep the program veiled in secrecy. The lack of transparency and accountability violate the basic tenets of a democratic society;
- Drones make killing more abstract, impersonal, antisectic, convenient and “easy”;
- The Administration insists that because drones do not risk American lives, Congress need not be consulted, leading to a dangerous abuse of executive power;
- Drone strikes have replaced Guantanamo as the recruiting tool of choice for militants. They fuel anti-American sentiment, radicalize local populations and perpetuate an endless cycle of violence.
- The example being set by the United States that a nation can go anywhere it wants and kill anyone it wants on the basis of secret information is leading to a world of chaos and lawlessness.

The world’s great religions teach us to cherish human life. This impersonal, risk-free killing of people on the other side of the globe runs counter to religious belief and the teachings of our traditions.

We urge our government to put an end to this secretive, remote-controlled killing and instead promote foreign policies that are consistent with the values of a democratic and humane society. We call on the United Nations to regulate the international use of lethal drones in a fashion that promotes a just and peaceful world community, based on the rule of law, with full dignity and freedom for every human being.

Therefore, we, the Alliance of Baptists, join with other faith leaders and organizations by signing the Drones Watch petition.