

## America is a Terrorist Nation

by willy scanlon via stan - OpEdNews *Thursday, Jun 6 2013, 8:40am*

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Four people were killed and 163 were injured in a bombing in Boston on Patriot's Day and it's a national tragedy. Now will someone please remind me just how many innocent people have been killed or injured by the Obama Drone program, which is also a terrorist act as defined under International law?

It certainly sounds a bit hypocritical--that a country promoted as the center of the known universe for freedom and democracy would be involved in repeated terrorist acts. Yet, in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and in Yemen the actions of the Obama administration's drone strikes are terrorist acts in the eyes of the people on the ground. There are no monetary funds for them as there are in Boston to pay for the lost limbs and lives. There are no daily news reports in the American mass media showing the suffering inflicted by drone strikes or the shattered lives the strikes leave behind. American news outlets do not cover the funerals of the murdered children, nor their wailing parents who can never be comforted. That is true terrorism.

A study published in September 2012 says just that. The study, conducted by both the New York and Stanford University law schools, "[Living Under Drones](#)" is the product of nine months of research and more than 130 interviews. It is one of the most exhaustive attempts by academics to understand -- and evaluate -- Washington's drone wars and American acts of terrorism on the domestic populations of Pakistan, Yemen and Afghanistan. One in 50 people are the actual target of a drone strike, according to the Red Crescent Society in Pakistan and the Pakistani government. Those figures are a bone of contention with Obama, who cites that the Pakistan reports are grossly inflated. According to the Pakistani Ministry of Defense, 60 cross-border predator strikes in the period from January 2006 to April 2009 killed 14 wanted al-Qaeda leaders and 687 Pakistani civilians. America likes to count every adult male as a militant in its drone bombing strikes: a behavior it retains from its body counting days in Vietnam, where every enemy soldier counted as three, as Chester Cooper wrote in his book; "The Lost Crusade". The Stanford and New York report's authors did not estimate the numbers of total civilian casualties, but suggested that the February 2012 Bureau of Investigative Journalism report was more accurate on civilian casualties. The [Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#), based on extensive research, found in mid-2011 that at least 385 civilians were among the dead, including more than 160 children.

The report also opined that the drone attacks were violations of international law, because the US government had not shown that the targets were direct threats to the US. The report further noted the US policy of considering all military-age males in a strike zone as militants unless exonerating evidence proves otherwise. Media outlets were also urged to cease using the term "militant" when reporting on drone attacks without further explanation.

According to the Stanford and New York University study, in 8 years there have been 345 drone strikes inside Pakistan. Pakistan says the attacks killed far more civilians than acknowledged, traumatized a nation, and undermined international law. In "Living under Drones," researchers conclude the drone strikes "terrorize men, women, and children, giving rise to anxiety and psychological trauma among civilian communities." The study by New York and Stanford Universities concludes most of the militants killed in the strikes were low-level targets whose deaths

failed to make the United States any safer. Just 2 percent of drone attack victims were top militant leaders.

The rest are what we in America like to call "collateral damage," mere rhetoric we use to mask our emotions from the terrible crime committed in our name. I was in Pakistan after a drone strike in 2009 and cried terribly from what I saw, plus then felt ashamed to be part of a nation that would do such a heinous and cowardly act as murdering innocent people. That is what a drone strike does. It's a heinous act; just as horrible as the one done at the Boston Marathon. I have fresh pictures and video of America's drone strikes sent to me by my contacts in Pakistan. Many are too graphic and disturbing to post here. In my sleep and my dreams, I still hear the screams of the children and the cries of the men and women trapped in the rubble from my trip to the Pakistan tribal areas in 2009 with my doctor friend from Islamabad who works for the Red Crescent Society. It's pure horror. But that is what terrorism is supposed to be: a brutal, public, and bloody act meant to instill fear. That is what the feeling was in Boston after the Boston Marathon bombings. But the people of Pakistan, Yemen, and Afghanistan feel the same as the people in Boston did for months, not days, after that terror act, when they are targeted and bombed daily with drones. We, as a nation, cry foul when the label terrorist gets applied to us. How could we as the cradle of democracy be associated with terrorism?

For instance, it is a relatively common practice now for the United States military to launch a "double tap" operation where a drone will strike an area, and the U.S. will then launch a repeat strike on the same area only 1-3 hours later. This practice is classified as a terrorist act by the UN High Court on War Crimes, because it is specifically meant to kill and injure the first responders. Many aid organizations, and even the Red Crescent Society, won't go into a strike area now for at least 6-8 hours because of the double tap drone policy of the Obama administration costing several of the lives of innocent responding heroes. Imagine what it is like for a child with life threatening injuries to lie in the rubble of a building on top of or beneath its dead parents for 6 to 8 hours before help arrives. Can you?

Obama likes to call these "surgical strikes" because he wants us to think they are so precise no innocent people are hurt or killed. That is an outright lie. Clive Stafford Smith, director of the charity, Reprieve, which helped interview people for the Stanford University report, said: "This shows that drone strikes go much further than simply killing innocent civilians. An entire region is being terrorized by the constant threat of death from the skies." (New York University School of Law Study- Life under the Drone)

My friend with the Red Crescent Society in Pakistan's tribal areas spoke with a 15-year-old boy who lost both legs in a drone strike, "I used to go to school. I thought I would become a doctor. After the drone strikes, I stopped going to school. I am too afraid to go outside." Researchers from the New York and Stanford study added traumatic effects of the strikes go far beyond fatalities, psychologically battering a population which lives under the daily threat of annihilation from the air, and ruining the local economy. There have been more than 1,000 innocent lives lost, according to the Red Crescent Society, because of America's daily drone strikes just on the Pakistan--Afghanistan border area. Obama called these strikes "legal" in his speech at the National Defense University on May 22nd.

"Whether we are driving a car, or we are working on a farm, or we are sitting at home playing cards -- no matter what we are doing we are always thinking the drone will strike us. So we are too scared to do anything," a taxi driver in Pakistan told myself and my friend with the Red Crescent Society in 2009. That's terrorism. America is a terrorist state and Obama is a terrorist whether America likes the designation or not. That is a fact! Deal with it.

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