June 2, 2017

Dear Senator,

In September 2011, the United States government ordered a UCAV strike on suspected terrorist Anwar al-Awlaki. The attack was an affront to the American principles of the rule of law and universal human rights because al-Awlaki was a US citizen and his innocent 16-year-old son was killed alongside him. According to the *Huffington Post,* “nearly 90 percent of people killed in recent drone strikes were not the target.” This statistic disturbs because it suggests the US drone program generally ignores laws and injures innocent people. As a country that prides itself on our stellar legal system and Civil Rights successes, we should feel saddened and embarrassed that our government operates what is essentially a foreign assassination program aided by the latest in military technology that so often bastardizes our most fundamental ideals. Senator, I vehemently implore you to pursue policies end the un-American practice of amoral drone warfare.

The unconstitutionality of the strike that killed American citizens Anwar al-Awlaki illustrates the lawless attitude which UCAV operations are carried out. The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution reads, “No person shall ... be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law…” While al-Awlaki was a horrific killer, criminal American citizens at home are still afforded due process under the Constitution. For instance, when the appalling Dylann Roof killed 9 churchgoers on June 17, 2015, he was afforded due process in our legal system. Roof’s crime undoubtedly was motivated by hate in the same way extremist groups like Al Qaeda or ISIS carry out attacks. If Roof after his monstrous actions was allowed a trial, then surely American citizen al-Awlaki would receive the same treatment. Moreover, al-Awlaki’s son, an American citizen, was not even guilty of a crime but was mercilessly executed without being afforded rights or legal proceedings. The drone program’s obvious violations of the US constitution signal that the entire operation must be fundamentally altered to adhere to the Constitution.

"All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent”, said Thomas Jefferson. The Framers understood that laws are only as just as the morality guiding them. Slavery, for example, was perhaps the greatest injustice America ever inflicted on another group of people, although the law condoned the inhumane practice. Likewise, when discussing the morality of drone warfare, we must understand that our beliefs about the justice of situation must influence the related laws, and not the other way around. The loss of innocent life can never be just. Indeed, when our government chose to execute al-Alwaki’s son and potentially other peaceful civilians, a morally bankrupt action occurred. No, these people are not acceptable “collateral damage.” What if our neighbors, friends, or family members were killed in a similar attack? Would they be acceptable “collateral damage”? Of course not. In the same way, because UCAV strikes often rob innocent people of their lives, foreign policy must be reconfigured in a deliberate effort to avoid harming innocent civilians in high tech attacks.

The drone program’s amorality is un-American. Senator, pursue UCAV policies that enforce the Constitution and protect innocent life. The continuation of the drone program is the forfeiture of compassion, human decency, and classical American values.

Sincerely,

Concerned Students From Louisiana