NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu and American peace activists speak out on drones

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy | Feb. 15, 2013 NCR Today

Earlier this week, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote a brief but piercing letter [1] to the editor in *The New York Times* on U.S. "kill lists" and drone use. In just a few short words, the Nobel Peace laureate gets to the heart of the problem with our new capability in killing power -- a deadly ignorance of our place on the planet.

> I am deeply, deeply disturbed at the suggestion in "A Court to Vet Kill Lists [2]" (news analysis, front page, Feb. 9) that possible judicial review of President Obama's decisions to approve the targeted killing of suspected terrorists might be limited to the killings of American citizens.
>
> Do the United States and its people really want to tell those of us who live in the rest of the world that our lives are not the same value as yours? That President Obama can sign off on a decision to kill us with less worry about judicial scrutiny than if the target is an American? Would your Supreme Court really want to tell humankind that we, like the slave Dred Scott in the 19th century, are not as human as you are? I cannot believe it.
>
> I used to say of apartheid that it dehumanized its perpetrators as much as, if not more than, its victims. Your response as a society to Osama bin Laden and his followers threatens to undermine your moral standing and your humanity.

Not every American is ensnared in the hubris Tutu describes. On Ash Wednesday, a day after Tutu's letter was published, nine peace activists, including a Catholic priest and several Catholic Workers, were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct while peaceably blocking the main entrance to Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in DeWitt, a town just outside Syracuse, N.Y.

Hancock, the regional hub for the MQ-9 Reaper drone used in Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere, has been the scene of numerous protests in the last two years that have been organized by The Upstate NY Coalition to Ground the Drones & End the Wars.

The activists issued the following statement explaining their presence at the air base:

> We come to Hancock Airfield, home of the National Reaper Drone Maintenance and Training Center, this Ash Wednesday to remember the victims of drone strikes and to ask God's forgiveness for the killing of other human beings, most especially children.
>
> The killer drone strikes and the US's killer drone policies have taken the lives of thousands in a number of countries, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. These strikes are illegal and immoral. Under international agreements, which the US has signed, the killing of civilians, extra-judicial murders, violations of national sovereignty, and violations of due process are ALL illegal acts.

> We come to Hancock Airfield this Ash Wednesday to repent for the actions of our government and to ask God's forgiveness of the people we daily terrorize with these drones.
>
> We remind ourselves that our lives are brief and mysterious, and that "from dust we were created and to dust we shall return." The significance of our brief animation is the degree to which we love one another.
>
> Lent is a time to repent -- literally to change our minds. It is a time to REMIND ourselves of Jesus' command to love our neighbors and our enemies. It is a time to REMIND ourselves of Jesus' radical, non-violent message of love.
>
> Stop the Killing. Ground the Drones. STOP the wars.

Those arrested are: Bill Frankel-Streit of Trevilians, Va; Nancy Gowen of Richmond, Va.; Ellen Grady of Ithaca, N.Y.; Linda LeTendre of Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; Reverend Bill Pickard of Scranton, Pa.; Matt Ryan of Ithaca, N.Y.; Mary Anne Grady Flores of Ithaca, N.Y.; Carmen Trotta of New York City; and Jim Clune of Binghamton, N.Y.

Source URL (retrieved on *02/07/2016 - 09:06*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/archbishop-desmond-tutu-and-american-peace-activists-speak-out-drones

Links:
[1] http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/13/opinion/drones-kill-lists-and-machiavelli.html?_r=0
[2] http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/09/world/a-court-to-vet-kill-lists.html