



**STATEMENT OF
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ARAB AMERICAN INSTITUTE
HEARING ON: DRONE WARS: THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND COUNTERTERRORISM
IMPLICATIONS OF TARGETED KILLING
SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND HUMAN RIGHTS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

April 30, 2013

Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Cruz and members of the Subcommittee: I am honored to submit this testimony for the record on behalf of the Arab American Institute for the hearing on "Drone Wars: The Constitutional and Counterterrorism Implications of Targeted Killing."

The Arab American Institute applauds the Subcommittee for holding this timely hearing. As you are aware, civilian casualties caused by drones have been a matter of intense debate. Most recently, several members of Congress have requested that there be greater transparency about the Administration's targeted strikes.

In the last decade alone, drone strikes have killed an estimated total of 2,600 to 4,700 people. Proponents of the use of drones assert that drone strikes are precise, but a study from Columbia Law School's Human Rights Institute found that the number of Pakistani civilians killed in drone strikes is "significantly and consistently underestimated."¹ "Between 2004 and

¹ "Counting Deaths from Drone Strikes," Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute, <http://web.law.columbia.edu/human-rights-institute/counterterrorism/drone-strikes/counting-drone-strike-deaths>.

mid-April 2013, the drone campaign in Pakistan has killed 55 militant leaders...while this represents a significant blow to the militant chain of command, these 55 deaths account for only two percent of all drone-related fatalities in Pakistan, ” said Peter Bergen during his prepared testimony. Similarly, in Yemen, the thirty-four leaders who have been killed there due to drone strikes, only account for six percent of the total casualties of strikes.²

Upon taking office in 2009, President Obama has used drones as a major national security tool. This Administration has drastically expanded the drones program, specifically authorizing 307 strikes in Pakistan alone, which was six times more than the number of strikes administered during both terms of President Bush. Additionally, under this Administration, the program accelerated from an average of one strike every 40 days to one every 4 days by mid-2011.

The testimony offered by Yemeni youth activist Farea Al-Muslimi on the impact of drone strikes on his home village in Wessab, Yemen was particularly eye opening: “Just six days ago, my village was struck by a drone, in an attack that terrified thousands of simple, poor farmers. The drone strike and its impact tore my heart, much as the tragic bombings in Boston last week tore your hearts and also mine,” said Farea.

What Farea poignantly spoke of in his testimony is the stain the Administration’s drone policy will leave on our standing in the international community and the unintended consequences of attacks that may serve as a recruitment tool for extremists. “What the violent militants had previously failed to achieve, one drone strike accomplished in an instant,” said Farea.

“For me personally, it is deeply troubling, astonishing, and challenging to reconcile that the very same hand that taught me English, awarded me scholarships, and dramatically improved my life is the hand that droned my village, terrified my people, and now makes it harder for them to believe the good things that I tell them about America and my American friends,” said Farea.

There needs to not only be greater transparency about the Administration’s drone policy, but better clarity on the legal justification and basis for the targeted strike. Further, the Administration needs to take additional steps to ensure that civilian populations do not continue to comprise the overwhelming majority of casualties.

² April 23, 2013 prepared testimony by witness Peter Bergen