

Koordinationsgruppe
„Appell - Keine Kampfdrohnen“
c/o Laura von Wimmersperg
Hauptstraße 37
10827 Berlin



His Excellency Simon McDonald CMG
British Ambassador to Germany
British Embassy
Wilhelmstraße 70/71
10117 Berlin
Germany

Berlin, April 23, 2013

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We are writing this Open Letter to you in connection with the "Ground the Drones"¹ protests against combat drones that will take place in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland on April 27th.¹ We represent the German Drone Campaign, which is against the establishment of drone technology for combat, surveillance and oppression.

The German Drone Campaign (Drohnen-Kampagne²) was launched last month by a coalition of numerous national and local peace and civil rights groups and organizations. It has already been endorsed by more than 120 organizations in Germany, including several political parties, including two in the current German parliament (Bundestag). In our Appeal "No Combat Drones"³ to the German government and parliament, we demand abandonment of all plans to acquire, research and develop weaponized drones.

We further demand that the German government instead join with other governments to put a stop to this ominous new escalation in the arms race that is "normalizing" the use of lethal weapons outside of public scrutiny, without democratic oversight and in clear violation of established international and national laws. We urge the German government to work with other governments towards a worldwide ban of combat drones.

Great Britain is so far the only country in Europe using weaponized combat drones. We are dismayed to learn that Great Britain will be doubling the number of Reapers in its arsenal and is already going ahead to establish what will likely be the first European-based control center for drone warfare -at RAF Waddington.

This unilateral decision of the British government could potentially provoke a competitive rush of governments in Europe and elsewhere to acquire and use of combat drones.

Moreover, even though the UK Ministry of Defence is reportedly cooperating with the United Nations inquiry regarding possible violations of international law through the use of unmanned drones in the Palestinian territories, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Afghanistan⁴, there are alarming reports that the UK Intelligence Centre GCHQ has been providing the US with intelligence for targeted killings in Pakistan⁵ and that US bases in the UK are directly supporting US targeted killings in Africa

The UN is quite rightly investigating the escalating number of drone strikes carried out by UK and US forces in Afghanistan. Since 2008 British drone strikes have been rapidly increasing in number and now make up nearly a third of the Coalition drone attacks on the Afghan people⁶.

1 <http://dronecampaignnetwork.wordpress.com>

2 <http://drohnen-kampagne.de/>

3 <http://drohnen-kampagne.de/files/2013/03/Appell-Keine-Kampfdrohnen.pdf>

4 http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/130124_SRCTBenEmmersonOCStatement.pdf

5 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/dec/21/high-court-drone-strikes-pakistan> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20807934>

6 <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2012/12/04/revealed-us-and-britain-launched-1200-drone-strikes-in-recent-wars/>

Over the past several years, UN officials have repeatedly expressed concern⁷ that the US and UK use of drones to target militants in Afghanistan may be a violation of international law, even on those occasions when civilians and children are not killed.

European countries must not embrace this ominous new form of warfare! The new drone wars that threaten to undermine the heritage of democratic laws, standards and safeguards established through centuries of struggle and deliberation.

It is known that the use of combat drones lowers the threshold to armed aggression; entails “targeted” killing of people even outside of war zones – without indictment, trial and conviction; terrorizes and endangers the general population of the targeted territories; encourages the development toward autonomous killer robots; and initiates a new round in the arms race.

A large majority of citizens across Europe opposes drone strikes, according to an international survey in 20 countries conducted by Pew Research last spring⁸. The survey found widespread opposition to drone strikes in every country surveyed in Continental Europe: 51% in Poland, 55% in Italy, 59% in Germany, 62% in the Czech Republic, 63% in France, 76% in Spain, and 90% in Greece disapproved of drone strikes. And a plurality of 47% in the United Kingdom also disapproved of drone strikes, while only 43% approved of them.

We are delighted that British citizens are actively challenging the current British drone program and will be marching to RAF Waddington on April 27th and protesting there. We wish to expressly convey our support of these British citizens, and we urge you to listen to them. Their strong opposition to combat drones is shared by large majorities across Europe and increasingly by US citizens as well.

Together with friends, colleagues and numerous organizations in the growing campaigns against combat drones throughout Europe, the United States and around the world, we of the German drone campaign will continue to speak up until our governments stop developing, acquiring and using combat drones.

It is crucial that the countries of Europe begin working now towards a consensus to prohibit the proliferation of weaponized drones, rather than joining a rush to develop, acquire and use them.

We urge the British government to cease using or condoning the use of weaponized drones and instead to join with other governments to work towards an international treaty banning all combat drones.

Sincerely,

⁷ <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/14session/A.HRC.14.24.Add6.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.pewresearch.org/2013/02/06/u-s-use-of-drones-under-new-scrutiny-has-been-widely-opposed-abroad/>