



News Release  
December 15, 2013

### **For Immediate Release**

## **"BAN WEAPONIZED DRONES"**

### **Anti-drone movement spreads in Europe**

Participants in a demonstration today against the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in Stuttgart, Germany, announced a new European anti-drone initiative and presented a statement from civil rights advocates, peace activists and parliamentarians of six European countries, Pakistan, and the USA: "Ban Weaponized Drones!" (*PDF attached*).

AFRICOM is where US secret service and military personnel, working out of Stuttgart, select African targets of US drone strikes. Among those demonstrating against AFRICOM today were Heike Haensel and Annette Groth, both members of the German Bundestag in the Left party, and the well-known US peace activist and drone expert, Medea Benjamin, co-founder of CODEPINK.

During a visit to Berlin last week, Benjamin met with members and staff of the Social Democratic (SPD), Green, and Left (DIE LINKE) parliamentary groups in the German Bundestag. However, the Christian Democratic (CDU/CSU) parliamentary group and Chancellor Merkel's government refused to grant Benjamin an appointment.

"It is urgent that the international community bring these new weapons systems under control and ultimately ban them," said Benjamin. "On the very day that I met with European peace activists in Berlin, at least seventeen people at a wedding celebration in Yemen were killed by a US drone strike. The German government is an accomplice to this and other US drone murders. The Satellite Relay Station at the US base in Ramstein, Germany, plays an essential role in every US drone strike in the Middle East and Africa. Why do the German people continue to allow their government to be complicit in such crimes?" she asked.

The statement "Ban Weaponized Drones!" was one result of an intensive working meeting of peace activists, civil rights advocates and parliamentarians from several different countries and political parties who came to Berlin to meet with Ms. Benjamin last week. A similar statement has been circulated since last spring by the German Drone Campaign and has won significant support.

The participants in the working meeting in Berlin criticized the European Council for considering approval of a European drone development project that does not explicitly rule out military uses for European drones. The European Council will meet in Brussels on December 19th and 20th to decide upon European defense matters, including the drone proposal.

However, the participants in the working meeting said they very much welcomed the current German public discussion about drones that has, at least for the moment, effectively called into

question whether the German government will be able to go ahead with its plan to acquire armed drones for the Bundeswehr (German Armed Forces). The debate in Germany represents a first -- and quite promising -- success, they said, for the campaign to stop the proliferation of weaponized drones in Europe. Italy, France, and the Netherlands are reportedly considering acquisition of weaponized drones in the near future, but public and parliamentary resistance could possibly put a halt to these plans.

A Global Day of Action against weaponized drones and targeted killing is scheduled for October 4th of next year. An international drone conference is also planned for 2014.

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