

April 11, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: Shared Concerns Regarding U.S. Drone Strikes and Targeted Killings

Dear President Obama,

The undersigned human rights and civil rights groups write to convey a statement of shared concerns regarding U.S. targeted killing policy. Our statement, attached, urges the administration to take essential steps to: publicly disclose key targeted killing standards and criteria; ensure that U.S. lethal force operations abroad comply with international law; enable meaningful congressional oversight and judicial review; and ensure effective investigations, tracking and response to civilian harm.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union
Amnesty International
Center for Human Rights & Global Justice, NYU School of Law
Center for Civilians in Conflict
Center for Constitutional Rights
Global Justice Clinic, NYU School of Law
Human Rights First
Human Rights Institute, Columbia Law School
Human Rights Watch
Open Society Foundations

political question, to prevent cases alleging human rights or constitutional violations from being heard on their merits.

IV. TRACK & RESPOND TO CIVILIAN HARM

At his recent nomination hearing to be director of CIA, John Brennan stated that the United States should publicly acknowledge mistakes of individuals or groups of

international humanitarian law, applicable in the narrow and exceptional circumstance of armed conflict, the U.S. can directly target only members of the armed forces of an enemy, military objectives, or civilians directly participating in hostilities.¹⁸ U.S. standards should reflect a presumption that unidentified individuals are civilians with protection from direct attack, unless and for sure as they take a direct part in hostilities.¹⁹

Outside of an armed conflict, where international h

interpretations of imminence would be inconsistent with international law regarding resort to the use of force.

As senior administration officials have recognized, U.S. targeted killing policies and practices will set a precedent for other nations, particularly as weaponized drone technology becomes more widely available. Lowering the threshold for the use of force outside armed conflicts could be in breach of international law, set a dangerous precedent, and weaken the U.S. government's ability to argue for constraints on lethal targeting operations of other states.

American Civil Liberties Union
Amnesty International
Center for Human Rights & Global Justice, NYU School of Law