Oral statement by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom on armed drones and international law

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom is extremely concerned with the use of armed drones both for extrajudicial killings outside of armed conflict and to conduct attacks during conflict.

Based on available information, it is difficult to see how the current use of armed drones is in compliance with international laws.

We are concerned with the lack of due process for those on “kill lists” and other violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law; the deaths and injuries of civilians and destruction of civilian objects; the lack of transparency around the operation and targeting of armed drones; the lack of comprehensive and accurate casualty recording; and the apparent lowering of the threshold for the use of force that is enabled by armed drones.

There is a shocking lack of transparency regarding the standards used to identify those who constitute a legal target as well as the number of civilians killed.

One of the most important tools for proper evaluation of attacks is comprehensive, detailed, and systematic casualty recording. But such records have not been produced by any state involved in launching or hosting drone strikes.

WILPF calls on all states operating armed drones to comply with international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and law governing the constraint of force.

All states must cease or refrain from extrajudicial killings with armed drones and all other means and methods. States have an obligation to provide due process to suspects and must not just kill them.

All states operating armed drones should release records of their targeting decisions and operations and legal advice in this regard.

All states operating armed drones must engage in comprehensive and accurate casualty investigations and recording efforts.