

Mennonite Church USA Resolution

Faithful Witness Amid Endless War

The United States of America is experiencing an era of boundless and endless war. This era began Sept. 14, 2001, when Congress passed the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF). It is not expected to end within the foreseeable future.

This is a different kind of war, without traditional armies operating under rules of war. The entire world is the battlefield. The enemy is shifting and ill-defined; sometimes it is a group with a history of recent collaboration with the U.S. Often the enemy is described vaguely as “terror” or “insecurity.”

This continuous state of war is the new normal. One consequence is that our nation no longer experiences times of national debate related to the morality of its participation in war.

Drone warfare is emblematic of our current state.

- It is carried out in nations whose governments are not at war with the U.S. It entails no declaration of war and little oversight by Congress. The President decides where, when and whom to kill. It is of doubtful legality under international law and, when directed against a U.S. citizen, of doubtful legality under U.S. law.
- It is a cheap way to conduct war and avoids loss of American life. This changes the calculus of war, making it painless for the vast majority of people living in the U.S.
- It often targets private residences and thus kills many innocent people. It terrorizes civilian populations by making normal routines of daily living acutely stressful.
- Many who experience drone attacks are radicalized by the experience. They perceive it as an acute injustice, which fosters a desire for revenge and heightens the risk of more terror.

We remain committed as a church to the belief that participation in war is contrary to the will of God. Yet as we live in the environment described above, we experience uncertainty about how to make our belief relevant to neighbors and friends and part of the “good news” we have found in Jesus Christ. When our young men were being drafted into the military, our belief translated into a specific witness within our context. Now, we need renewed understanding of how to live out the “new creation” that is in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17).

Again, drone warfare is a revealing example of our current uncertainty. Our congregations have paid little attention to its thousands of victims, many (some would say most) of whom are innocent of any ill intent toward the U.S. When we speak of drone warfare, we are apt to note its advantages as compared to “boots on the ground.” Although innocent individuals are being killed on our behalf, we rarely object. Although a new “generation” of robotic weapons is being developed to protect our “security,” few of us have dissented. This suggests that our moral sensitivities have become calloused and that we are adapting to the normality of continuous war.

Therefore, the Delegate Assembly of Mennonite Church USA:

1. **Calls affiliated congregations** to a renewed emphasis on trusting God and the way of Jesus, not violence, for our security. For this teaching to be effective, it must address our society’s commitment to the moral necessity of violence, our government’s undisclosed purposes in its so-called “security efforts,” and our often secret sympathies with so-called security operations. It also must seek the renewal of our minds in Jesus Christ (Romans 12:2).
2. **Calls the agencies, educational institutions and conferences affiliated with Mennonite Church USA** to ministries of healing and renewal in response to the moral injuries experienced by those who feel the guilt for having killed in the name of security and experienced by those who feel no guilt for the killing done on their behalf (John 8:11; Amos 5:21-24).
3. **Directs the staff of Mennonite Church USA** to actively seek and implement forms of public ecumenical witness to our confession: “Some trust in their war chariots and others in their horses, but we trust in the power of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7).
4. **Calls for an immediate ban on research, development, production and deployment of robotic and autonomous weapons, including military drones, and associated Artificial Intelligence technologies— placing them in the same category as chemical and biological weapons.**

Passed by the Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly at Kansas City, Missouri, July 1, 2015