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## **Implementation of Executive Order of July 1, 2016**

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## Implementation of Executive Order of July 1, 2016

Human rights organizations urge Obama Administration to acknowledge and investigate 10 drone strikes for which there is credible evidence of civilian casualties

October 6, 2016, NEW YORK – The Columbia Law School Human Rights Clinic today urged the Obama Administration to fulfill its promises of transparency and accountability for U.S. drone strikes. Over the past decade, the U.S. government has killed thousands of people around the world in a program largely cloaked in secrecy. Together with a group of leading non-governmental organizations, the Clinic called on the government to act on promises it made over the summer to investigate drone strikes and compensate victims.

“The Obama Administration has just three months left to make good its pledges of increased transparency and accountability, and to set a positive precedent for future administrations,” said Alex Moorehead, Director of the Counterterrorism, Armed Conflict and Human Rights Project at Columbia University Law School’s Human Rights Institute. “Victims who have been injured or lost family members continue to suffer as a result of U.S. government secrecy. The government should acknowledge these strikes, explain why victims were killed or injured, and provide compensation.”

The [NGO letter](#) released today highlights ten strikes carried out between 2009-2014 in Yemen and Pakistan as especially concerning. The United Nations, journalists, and NGOs conducted detailed investigations in each of these cases, and uncovered troubling and credible evidence of civilian casualties and potentially unlawful killings. To date, the U.S. government has not publicly acknowledged the strikes, released the results of any post-strike investigations, or provided compensation to victims’ families. This contrasts with its treatment of some Western victims of drone strikes, who have been publicly acknowledged and their families compensated.

"This sets a double standard," said Clinic student Suraj Girijashanker LLM '17, who before studying at Columbia worked in Egypt, Turkey, and Papua New Guinea. "The U.S. government needs to demonstrate that it takes responsibility for harm caused to all civilians, regardless of their nationality."

The NGO letter raises serious concerns about U.S. killing practices, including the strike approval process, inaccurate accounting of civilian casualties, lack of congressional and judicial oversight, and international legal violations. [Earlier this week](#), President Obama himself cautioned against the development of practices which enable “a president [to] carry on perpetual wars all over the world... without any accountability or democratic debate.”

“Secret killings carried out as part of a perpetual, global war undermine human rights and the rule of law, and threaten world safety and security,” said Clinic student Katherine Berry, JD '18. “The Obama Administration has one last chance to fix its excessively secret and unaccountable program.”

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The NGO letter released today can be found [here](#).

The Human Rights Institute and Clinic work with civil society around the world to advance respect for international law in the context of lethal force and U.S. counterterrorism and military operations abroad, and to address pervasive secrecy and impunity. The Institute and Clinic have made significant contributions to the national and international debates on U.S. drone strikes, including making [submissions](#) to the U.K. Parliament, advocating before the UN Human Rights Council for [accountability for targeted killings](#), submitting [evidence](#) to a 2011 U.S. Senate Judiciary hearing on drones, and authoring a major report on [The Civilian Impact of Drones Strikes](#) in collaboration with the [Centre for Civilians in Conflict](#). For more information, visit <http://web.law.columbia.edu/human-rights-institute/counterterrorism/accountability-targeted-killings-drone-strikes>.

The [Human Rights Clinic](#) is an intensive year long course directed by [Sarah Knuckey](#), the Lief Cabraser Heimann and Bernstein Clinical Associate Professor of Human Rights and the faculty co-director of the [Human Rights](#)

[Institute](#) at Columbia Law School, as well as by Senior Clinical Teaching Fellow [Benjamin Hoffman](#). The Clinic brings together human rights work, student education, critical reflection, and scholarly research. Students are trained to be strategic human rights advocates, while pursuing social justice in partnership with civil society and communities, and advancing human rights methodologies and scholarship. For more information, visit <http://web.law.columbia.edu/clinics/human-rights-clinic>.