

From Upstate Drone Action Coaliton

We assemble here this morning to petition our government to end its use of killer MQ9 Reaper Drones piloted from Hancock Air Force Base. Hancock is home to the 174th Attack Wing of the New York State National Guard. The 174th – together with all too many other U.S. bases across the planet – has been waging murderous war, in our name, against the people of the Islamic oil lands, against Iraqis, Iranians, Afghans, Pakistanis, Somalis, Libyans.

We come from across New York State and beyond, united as the Upstate Drone Action Coalition, a grassroots assembly of nonviolent activists. For years our local members have demonstrated here weekly, protesting Hancock's role in these crimes against humanity. A score of times for the past decade Upstate Drone Action – under cover of the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution – has engaged in civil resistance at Hancock's very gate. Dozens of us have been arrested, have gone to trial, and some have endured prison. We persist because MQ9 drone attacks are evil. They are shameful, barbaric, illegal, racist. They are unjust, immoral, cowardly. They are Islamophobic. They help generate the planet's swelling ranks of refugees as human beings are displaced, maimed, killed, orphaned, widowed. Sadly, drone attacks numb our consciences.

Weaponized drone attacks are naked terrorism. What is this "terrorism," constantly invoked, but rarely defined? Genuine terrorism is violence – or the threat of violence – perpetrated on civilians for political or economic gain. Our nation is the greatest purveyor of terrorism on our planet.

U.S. terrorism spawns blowback. Last January's Reaper Drone assassination of Iran's General Qassim Suliemani, for example, risked extreme retaliation. Given the volatility of our era, such attacks may very well spark nuclear war... that is, global annihilation. High-tech drone terrorism generates proliferation, with many nations racing – in defense – for mastery of the skies. Weaponized and surveillance drones already come home to roost. Hancock's Reaper Drones, menacingly, have even surveilled our weekly demonstrations.

Friends, look around you. See the imagery from that brilliant 19th century fable, Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. We call our 21st century tableau "Alice's Nightmare in Drone Land."