

How to fight Obama's police-state policies

Statement by Jerry White, SEP candidate for president

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The drive towards an American police state that began under George W. Bush is accelerating under his Democratic successor. The Obama administration is now asserting the right to kill or jail indefinitely anyone designated by the president as a threat to US national security. Obama and his legal aides declare this to be an absolute power of the executive, unreviewable by any court or by Congress.

Obama's Attorney General, Eric Holder defended the assassination doctrine in a speech March 5 at Northwestern University Law School, where he outlined the purported legal basis for the killing of Anwar al-Awlaki, the US citizen who was incinerated last September in Yemen by a missile fired by a CIA-controlled drone.

According to Holder, the congressional resolution passed in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 gives the president as commander-in-chief continuing power to order such extra-judicial state murders based solely on his own discretion, without even the pretext of judicial review.

This speech made the extraordinary claim that the right to "due process of law," guaranteed to all Americans under the Fifth Amendment, does not mean a "judicial process." That is, the president's determination that a US citizen can be killed—anywhere, including in the United States itself—is sufficient to satisfy the Constitution.

The attorney general's speech was largely ignored by the mass media, and not a single reporter at Obama's press conference the next day asked him about this new doctrine of a presidential right to murder. This only demonstrates the extreme erosion of democratic consciousness in the American ruling class over the past dozen years, since the stolen presidential election of 2000. There is no significant constituency for democratic rights in any section of the US ruling elite, Democratic or Republican.

Holder's speech follows on Obama's executive order

February 28, officially putting into effect the provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2011. This law gives the president the power to arrest any person in the United States, citizen or non-citizen, and jail them forever without a trial.

While the executive order ostensibly waives the power of indefinite detention for American citizens, this is simply a cynical fraud on the part of the administration. The law remains and can be implemented at any time.

Holder has been designated as the president's agent to make day-to-day decisions on the fate of those non-citizens who are seized as suspects in the "war on terror." He can order those arrested to be transferred to military custody, where their detention would be unreviewable by any judge, or have them sent into the civilian justice system, where they would be tried by a federal court.

Finally, on Thursday, Obama signed into law HR 347, a bill that significantly expands on existing anti-democratic laws prohibiting demonstrations and civil disobedience at the White House or at any location being visited by the president, vice president or other officials under Secret Service protection. This includes three of the four remaining Republican presidential candidates, Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich.

The ban would apply to the Democratic and Republican national conventions and debates and rallies during the presidential election campaign, with penalties of one year in prison, or up to ten years if the protesters are deemed to have been "violent."

The Federal Restricted Buildings and Grounds Improvement Act of 2011 was passed by the House of Representatives by a margin of 388 to 3, and by the US Senate without a single dissenting vote. The American media has been virtually silent on the legislation, and the White House web site published a notice that Obama had signed it without adding any further comment.

The dismantling of the most basic democratic principles is a product of the extreme growth of social inequality.

The aristocracy of the super-rich requires that the government function ever more openly as an instrument of class dictatorship. For the last decade, the attacks on democratic rights have been conducted under the banner of “anti-terrorism.” But the real target of the methods of mass surveillance, detention without trial, state torture and killing is not a handful of Islamic fundamentalists, but the great mass of working people.

It is impossible for the ruling elite to impose its program of slashing jobs, living standards and social services democratically. Instead, what is emerging in America is a “national security state” involving hundreds of thousands of police, spies and thugs, backed up by the military power of the Pentagon, which commands more resources than the military forces of the rest of the world combined.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on working people to launch a counteroffensive in defense of democratic rights, including the shutting down of all the branches of the police-state apparatus, from the Department of Homeland Security to the FBI and CIA, and the repeal of the Patriot Act, the NDAA, HR 347 and a myriad other anti-democratic laws.

The defense of democracy must be connected to the mass mobilization of the working class in opposition to the capitalist system. Socialism requires the widest extension of democratic rights, because it means for the first time in history, the vast majority of the people, the working class, will exercise state power.

This will mean the establishment of genuine democracy, not only in the political sphere, but in the workplace as well, giving working people control over jobs, working conditions, wages and benefits, and over the production process as a whole, and abolishing the dictatorship of corporate wealth.



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