

# ISO silent on Obama's kill list

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More than two weeks ago, on May 29, the *New York Times* published an extraordinary article describing in detail President Obama's role in ordering drone assassinations against individuals all over the world. Obama presides over weekly meetings of military and intelligence officials, according to the *Times*, where he reviews a "kill list" and selects individuals, including US citizens, to be targeted. There is no judicial review. (See: "Obama's role in the selection of drone missile targets".)

Thousands of people in countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia have been exterminated in this way. Since the *Times* article, Obama's drone attacks have killed dozens more. An attack on June 6 massacred 18 Afghan civilians, including seven children.

The administration is institutionalizing a global killing operation that will eventually be extended to the United States as well. Last week, ABC News posted a commentary by the head of the Center for Democracy and Technology warning of the proliferation of drones in American airspace capable of monitoring political protests and firing weapons.

The *Times* evidently published its account of a global assassination operation run from the White House situation room with the collaboration of the administration, seeking to boost the Obama reelection campaign's effort to present the incumbent as an unflinching commander-in-chief in the "war on terror." Nevertheless, the chilling description could and should serve as evidence in a future war crimes trial of Obama and his fellow assassins. It indicates the advanced stage of the collapse of American democracy and preparations for a police state.

Yet since the appearance of the article, SocialistWorker.org, the publication of the International Socialist Organization in the US, has not

posted a single article on the topic. How is this silence to be explained?

In ignoring Obama's "kill list," the ISO reflects the political priorities of the social layers it represents. The ISO is one of a number of organizations that employ socialist rhetoric, but in fact speak on behalf of privileged layers of the upper-middle class. It promotes a fraudulent "leftism," dominated by identity politics, that is hostile to Marxism and the political independence of the working class.

The main concern of the organization is its relationship with various factions of the trade union apparatus and the Democratic Party. This finds a reflection in the topics it chooses to write on as well as the content of the articles.

In the past two weeks, the ISO has found time to publish several articles on the Chicago teachers union (where one of its members is vice president); the relationship of African-Americans to the Communist Party; gender inequality in pay (an issue that is being raised by the Democrats, in cynical fashion, as part of their reelection campaign); Obama and LGBT rights; and the Wisconsin recall election, though it took nearly a week for it to write on the debacle for the Democrats, whose candidate the ISO supported.

More fundamentally, the "kill list," by exposing the criminality of the Obama administration, cuts across the role of the ISO and its leaders as political operatives of the Democratic Party and the trade union apparatus. The ISO hailed the election of Obama in 2008 as a "transformative event" in American politics and is seeking to uphold this fiction in the 2012 elections, under conditions of widespread popular disillusionment.

A search of the ISO's web site also reveals that it did not write a single article on the speech last March by Obama's attorney general, Eric Holder, in which he presented a pseudo-legal justification for Obama's

drone assassinations of US citizens, including alleged Al Qaeda leader Anwar al-Awlaki.

Holder argued that, “the Constitution guaranteed due process, not judicial process.” On these grounds, he declared that the president had the right to order the execution of a US citizen based solely on the internal deliberations of the executive branch.

The implications of Holder’s speech are sweeping. They constitute a pseudo-constitutional justification for presidential dictatorship. If the life of a citizen can be taken based solely on the say-so of the president, then all democratic rights are undermined. The president can do whatever he wants.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted at the time of Holder’s remarks, “One would think that such a sweeping and extraordinary speech, asserting the right of the US government to summarily kill its own citizens, would become the focus of political discussion and the topic of heated debate. In fact, the media and the political establishment virtually ignored it.”

The media and the political establishment continue in their efforts to cover up the vast erosion of democracy in the United States—begun under Bush and expanded under Obama. The ISO, as the “left” flank of this political establishment, participates in the general conspiracy.



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