

U.S. Senate hearing foccuses on U.S. drone warfare

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Washington, February 10 (RHC)-- Human rights experts told a U.S. Senate panel Wednesday that Congress should take back authority for use of lethal force from the executive branch. The testimony came during the Senate Judiciary Committee's first hearing into the military's use of drones in nearly a decade.

Citing the monitoring group Airwars, Committee Chair Dick Durbin noted that as many as 30,000 civilians had been killed as a result of U.S. coalition airstrikes since that 2013 hearing. This is ACLU attorney Hina Shamsi, testifying Wednesday.

Hina Shamsi said: “Successive presidents have used secretive war-based rules to kill terrorism suspects in places where we weren’t or aren’t at war. In doing so, they’ve crossed the lines between wartime and peacetime powers that are essential to the rule of law, to democratic accountability and the right to life.

Despite widespread credible accounts of horrifying civilian deaths, the executive branch kept expanding the program and the categories of groups and people who could be targeted. It used vague and ever-shifting secret legal justifications. If any other country had done this, we would call it unlawful extrajudicial killing, yet it’s a core component of what Americans now call our forever wars.”

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