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Press TV

US steps up drone attacks in Afghanistan despite UN condemnation

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The United States has stepped up its assassination drone attacks in Afghanistan despite the United Nations' condemnation of targeted killings, Press TV reports.

According to United States military data, Afghanistan was the main target of American assassination drone attacks in 2012, with some 450 strikes, which is more than double the previous year's number.

Washington claims the targets of the drone attacks are al-Qaeda militants, but local officials and witnesses maintain that civilians have been the main victims of the attacks over the past few years.

“Unfortunately, they think they can win this war by killing civilians. Actually, these attacks are revenges from the loss that the US government has faced in Afghanistan,” Mohammad Daoud Abedi with Afghan Nation Peace Council told Press TV.

This comes while the United Nations has identified the United States as the world's number one user of targeted killings, largely due to its drone attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Reports say over 3,300 people, many of them women and children, were killed in US drone attacks in Pakistan between June 2004 and September 2012.

Rights and peace groups opposed to the targeted killings say the US administration has already violated international law by pursuing its assassination drone attacks.

Meanwhile, the UN plans to set up an investigation team in Geneva to probe the American drone attacks, as UN officials are concerned that Washington is setting a legal and ethical precedent for other countries developing armed drones.

The targeted killings started under former President George W. Bush and were expanded by President Barack Obama. In 2012, Obama personally approved the names put on the "kill lists" used in the targeted killing operations carried out by American assassination drones.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are not the only countries targeted by the US assassination drones. The unmanned aircraft are also operating in Yemen and Somalia.

According to a report compiled by the Washington think-tank, New America Foundation, the number of the US drone airstrikes in Yemen almost tripled this year compared with the previous one.

The report said that the United States has intensified its drone strikes in Yemen as well, increasing the number of operations drastically from 18 in 2011 to 53 in 2012 and killing at least 223 people.