



WITH GROUND TROOPS WITHDRAWING FROM AFGHANISTAN, DEFENDING RIGHTS & DISSENT CALLS FOR REPEAL OF AUMF & CLOSURE OF GUANTANAMO BAY PRISON

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Just days after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, Congress overwhelmingly passed a joint resolution "to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States" (AUMF). While many members of Congress understood their vote to be authorizing military action against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban government in Afghanistan, the vague resolution made no direct reference to any organization or country. Instead it referenced those who carried out the attack and governments who harbored them.

Nearly two decades later, this blank check for war has been used to justify military actions in at least 19 different countries. US Presidents have cited it to justify military actions against groups that had no relationship to the September 11th attacks.

The AUMF has been used for more than just endless war. George W. Bush claimed the AUMF gave him authority to authorize military detention of US citizens on US soil and engage in warrantless wiretapping. While Defending Rights & Dissent emphatically rejected such legal arguments as meritless, it illustrates the expansive claims the executive branch has made about the AUMF. The AUMF remains the legal underpinning of military detention at Guantanamo Bay and was cited by President Obama when he ordered the extrajudicial execution of US citizens.

With ground troops leaving Afghanistan, the original purpose for the AUMF as understood at its time of passage is over. It cannot be allowed to remain on the books for another 20 years to be abused in all manners by subsequent administrations. Similarly, while Defending Rights & Dissent has always opposed indefinite detention at Guantanamo Bay, any justification for its continuation is gone. We call for it to be closed.

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Defending Rights & Dissent fights to fulfill the promise of the Bill of Rights for everyone. DRAD was created in 2015 out of the merger of two envelope-pushing organizations: the Bill of Rights Defense Committee (BORDC) and the Defending Dissent Foundation (DDF). BORDC was founded in 2001, following the introduction of the PATRIOT Act, and coordinated the successful passage of resolutions opposing government spying in over 400 cities and towns across the country, as well as eight states, reflecting a transpartisan populist consensus in favor of liberty and privacy. DDF was founded in 1960 to fight the McCarthy-era witch hunt that targeted law-abiding Americans on the basis of their political beliefs.