

April 7, 2011

Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland
Chairman, Norwegian Nobel Committee
Henrik Ibsens gate 51,
0255 Oslo, NORWAY

Subject: Request to Rescind Nobel Peace Prize of President Barack Obama

Dear Mr. Jagland:

I write to respectfully request the rescinding of the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to President Barack Obama.

It is likely that current statutes include no provisions for rescinding a Peace Prize. However statutes can be amended, and one can without difficulty imagine circumstances that would require this. For example, suppose some initially benevolent political leader received a Peace Prize, but later became despotic and killed millions of people in a genocidal pogrom. Clearly it would then be incumbent on the Nobel Committee to rescind the Peace Prize, and to make any statutory changes required for this. This hypothetical example having established the principle, it then becomes a matter of determining whether actions of President Obama would justify its application.

At issue is the flagrant disregard President Obama has shown towards Peace. Specific examples that demonstrate this include:

1. Resistance to end the War in Afghanistan
2. Commencement of U.S. military action in Libya
3. Tacit support of Israeli settlement of the West Bank
4. Expansion of the *drone missile war in Pakistan*

It is the last point – the Pakistan drone war, which has escalated significantly since President Obama took office, and by his express orders – that I wish to emphasize here.

The inhumaneness and immorality of large-scale drone attacks in Northern Pakistan should be evident to all. There is little to suggest that these attacks have strategic, military value. (Why attack combatants away from the battlefield?) Rather, the strikes, monstrous, constitute a form of terrorism, attacking the Taliban in their homes and villages, with drones sometimes circling for hours before launching missiles, leaving entire communities in dread and mortal fear, killing family members as well as combatants, and producing widespread demoralization and despair.

The dehumanization of remote drone operators, who are placed in the role of assassins, should also be considered.

Besides the issue of morality is that of international law – and it is here that the Committee may wish to consider the Pakistan drone attacks most carefully. The 'official' policy of the Obama administration (to the extent that it acknowledges these covert, CIA actions) is that they are *extrajudicial killings* or *extrajudicial executions* – which, of course, is a euphemism for assassination. Initially, drone strikes were, ostensibly, launched against high-ranking al-Qaeda leaders; therefore at least the pretense could be offered that they were necessary to deter a direct and immediate threat to the security of the United States.

Such a rationale might possibly be used to justify one or two strikes. The occurrence of 10-20 such assassinations, however, should elicit grave concern in the international community. But so far there have been over 200 strikes!

Clearly the Obama administration is not restricting the attacks to high-level terrorist leaders. Rather, they are using Pakistan drone strikes as a routine appendage to the overall war effort in Afghanistan. The reality is that the Obama administration is waging war in the sovereign country of Pakistan, without a declaration of war, and this is being done under the pretense of "extrajudicial killing."

These attacks are detestable enough in themselves. But it is a flagrant, willful violation of international law to wage war by calling it extrajudicial killing. The Obama administration is defying the international community, and as much as saying, "we know we're wrong and you know we're wrong, but there's nothing you can do about it."

There is also here something subtle and possibly even more insidious. In effect, President Obama is saying: "to justify this illegal action – namely an undeclared war in Pakistan – we will reclassify it as something merely immoral – namely widescale assassination. This reveals not just a profound disregard for truth, but also an incognizance of the fact that the dictates of morality are prior to and supersede those of international law. This is deeply disturbing because it implies a lack of concern for morality altogether.

The fact that President Obama has made public jokes about drone attacks, such as mock threats to use them against his daughters' suitors, while seemingly minor in themselves, nonetheless betray the little regard he has for his status as a Nobel Peace Laureate.

It is widely suggested that President Obama suffers from an excess of arrogance and hubris. If so, one can easily see how his Peace Prize would add to this tendency: for no matter what he does, his immortal fame seems assured by the award.

In view of the above points – which I submit are basically correct – one cannot see why the Nobel Committee would want to have President Obama keep the Peace Prize.

In consideration of your time please let me close directly by offering three alternative suggestions:

1. To, via any necessary statutory changes, rescind the Peace Prize of President Obama;
2. To commission a study to investigate whether President Obama has committed acts that might warrant the rescinding of the Prize; a press announcement of this might have a sobering effect on President Obama;
3. To commission a study and report aimed at determining generally what statutory or other steps would be required to rescind a Peace Prize; again, a public announcement of this might have a salubrious effect.

I close by respectfully acknowledging the great contributions of the Nobel Committee to the advancement of Peace and Society. With gratitude and appreciation I am,

Sincerely yours,

John S. Uebersax