

A CALL TO RESIST ILLEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

To the young men of America, to the whole of the American people, and to all men of good will everywhere:

1. An ever growing number of young American men are finding that the American War in Vietnam so outrages their deepest moral and religious sense that they cannot contribute to it in any way. We share their moral outrage.

2. We further believe that the war is unconstitutional and illegal. ~~Congress has not declared a war as required by the Constitution. Moreover,~~ Under the Constitution treaties signed by the President and ratified by the Senate have the same force as the Constitution itself. The Charter of the United Nations is such a treaty. The Charter specifically obligates the United States to refrain from force or the threat of force in international relations. It requires member states to exhaust every peaceful means of settling disputes and to submit disputes which cannot be settled peacefully to the Security Council. The United States has systematically violated all of these Charter provisions for thirteen years.

3. Moreover this war violates international agreements, treaties and principles of law which the United States Government has solemnly endorsed. The combat role of United States troops in Vietnam violates the 1954 Geneva Accords which our government pledged to support and has since subverted. The destruction of rice, crops and livestock; the burning and bulldozing of entire villages consisting exclusively of civilian structures; the interning of civilian non-combatants in concentration camps; the summary executions of civilians in captured villages who could not produce satisfactory evidence of their loyalties, or did not wish to be removed to concentration camps, or dared to stand up in their field and shake their fists at American helicopters; -- these are all actions which the United States and the other victorious powers of World War II declared to be crimes against humanity for which individuals were personally responsible even when acting under the orders of their governments and for which Germans at Nuremberg were sentenced to long prison terms and death. These principles were solemnly incorporated in treaty law by the Geneva Conventions of 1949, ratified by the U.S.

4. We also believe it is an unconstitutional denial of religious liberty and equal protection of the laws to withhold draft exemption from men whose religious or profound philosophical beliefs are opposed to what in the Western religious tradition have been long known as unjust wars.

5. Therefore, we believe on all these grounds that any American citizen is morally bound and legally justified in exerting every effort to end this war, to avoid collusion with it, and to encourage others to do the same. Young men in the armed forces or threatened with the draft face the

most excruciating choices. For them various forms of resistance risk separation from their families and their country, destruction of their careers, loss of their freedom and loss of their lives. Each must choose the course of resistance dictated by his conscience and circumstances. Among those already in the armed forces some are refusing to obey specific illegal and immoral orders, some are attempting to educate their fellow servicemen on the murderous and barbarous nature of the war, some are absenting themselves without official leave. Among those not in the armed forces some are applying for status as conscientious objectors to American aggression in Vietnam, some are refusing to be inducted. Among both groups some are resisting openly and paying the full price, some are organizing more resistance within the United States and some have sought sanctuary in other countries.

6. We believe that each of these forms of resistance against illegitimate authority is courageous, moral and legally justified. Many of us believe that open resistance to the war and the draft is most likely to bring an end to the war and to strengthen the moral resolve with which all of us can oppose the war.

7. We will continue to lend our support to those who undertake resistance to this war. We will raise funds to organize draft resistance unions to supply legal defense and bail, to support families and otherwise aid resistance to the war in whatever ways may seem appropriate.

8. We firmly believe that our statement is the sort of speech that under the First Amendment must be free, and that the actions we will undertake are as legal as is the war resistance of the young men themselves. But we recognize that the courts may find otherwise, and that if so we might all be liable to prosecution and severe punishment. In any case we feel that we cannot shrink from fulfilling our responsibilities ~~as intellectuals and clergymen, our responsibility~~ to the youth whom many of us teach, to the country whose free citizens we are, and to the ancient traditions of religion and philosophy which we strive to preserve in this generation.

9. We call upon all men of good will to join us. Especially we call upon the universities to fulfill their mission of enlightenment and the churches to honor their heritage of brotherhood in this confrontation with uncivilized and unholy mass murder. Now is the time to resist.