



## **Alternatives to Endless War: A Sustainable, Effective Response to ISIS**

It's not too late to stop an endless war in Iraq and Syria. We've spent over \$1.1 billion<sup>1</sup> bombing Iraq and Syria since August 2014, yet Congress has not debated or authorized our latest war.

It will take grassroots pressure to move Congress. We can start by popularizing the possible steps towards a political solution. Instead of another endless war, Members of Congress should stand up in support of effective alternatives. Below are possible ways for the U.S. government to take action NOW! These are examples of the many alternatives available to move towards a political solution.

**From November 11-16, over twenty national peace and justice groups will join together to press Congress in their offices, online, and in the streets to take action.**

### **The United States Congress can:**

- Insist that President Obama seek congressional authorization for continued military intervention, and then vote to oppose our latest war in Iraq and Syria
- Cosponsor measures like H. Con. Res. 114, offered by the Congressional Progressive Caucus, to require Congress to debate, vote, and constrain U.S. military intervention
- Support measures to prohibit U.S. ground troops, sunset the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for the Use of Military Force (the bills that authorized U.S. military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan), and bolster the alternatives listed below

### **The United States can take immediate unilateral action to:**

- Tighten loopholes in existing sanctions to help cut off ISIS's funding streams:
  - ISIS profits from selling petroleum<sup>2</sup>, archaeological artifacts<sup>3</sup>, and wheat<sup>4</sup>
- Condition U.S. support for the Iraqi government on success in stopping sectarian violence and promoting inclusive governance. This can undermine the roots of ISIS's hold in Iraq
- Cut off U.S. government contracts with anyone doing business with ISIS
- Increase humanitarian funds for acute needs. The UN's Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan for 2014 is only half-way funded. As winter approaches, the key World Food Program has run out of funds: rations will be cut and some refugees will go without any WFP aid<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Baldor, Lolita. "Pentagon: Up to \$1.1 billion cost for Iraq, Syria." *AP*. 6 Oct. 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, Patrick and Bahney, Benjamin. "Hitting ISIS Where It Hurts." *New York Times*. 13 Aug. 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Drennan, Justine. "The Black-Market Battleground." *Foreign Policy*. 17 Oct. 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Fick, Maggie. "Islamic State uses grain to tighten grip in Iraq." *Reuters*. 30 Sep. 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Lund, Aron. "Let Them Eat Bombs" *Carnegie Endowment*. 17 Oct. 2014.

- Stop channeling weapons into the war. ISIS has captured and used U.S.-made weapons<sup>6</sup>
- Support civil society efforts<sup>7</sup> to build peace and reconciliation<sup>8</sup> at the community level<sup>9</sup>

**The United States can support multilateral efforts to:**

- Ensure that all parties to the armed conflict in Syria allow unfettered access to humanitarian organizations and agencies to provide assistance to civilians
- Build regional stability and security through aid for refugee host nation communities to reinforce stressed health, education, and housing infrastructure and to encourage job creation<sup>10</sup>
- Keep the conflict from spreading to Jordan, Turkey or Lebanon etc. by encouraging a global effort to share responsibility for resettling refugees from Iraq and Syria<sup>11</sup>
- Restrict ISIS's access to the international financial system<sup>12</sup>
- Support a political solution to Syria's civil war:
  - With the UN and regional powers, press the regime and rebels to support truces to reduce non-combatant deaths and increase the focus on defending against ISIS<sup>13</sup>
  - Re-energize diplomacy for negotiation on a political transition that would include all parties to the conflict as well as outside parties, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia and the U.S. A regional Contact Group could lay the groundwork for peace talks
  - If necessary, the UN General Assembly could assume responsibility under the Uniting for Peace procedure (to circumvent possible Security Council inaction)
  - Begin discussions and planning for a possible international peacekeeping or stabilization mission in Syria (and possibly parts of Iraq)<sup>14</sup>

**The United States can work with regional states and organizations to:**

- Engage in strategic outreach to Sunni communities in both Iraq and Syria to address political and economic grievances and thus undermine crucial political support for ISIS<sup>15</sup>
- Work to impose an arms embargo against all armed actors in Iraq and Syria. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait have provided weapons to the opposition, including ISIS, in Syria<sup>16</sup>
- Work with the states near ISIS territory to close the borders leading into and out of ISIS areas, thus depriving the jihadists of supplies<sup>17</sup>
- Conduct a social media campaign that exposes the grotesque nature of ISIS ideology:
  - "It is only when we contest ISIL's presence online, deny the legitimacy of the message it sends to vulnerable young people and expose ISIL for the un-Islamic cult of violence it really is... that ISIL will truly be defeated," said retired U.S. Gen. John Allen.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Wong, Kristina. "Pentagon: ISIS Nabs US Weapons." *The Hill*. 22 Oct. 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Barsa, Michelle and Williams, Kristin. "Syrian Women Know How to Defeat ISIS." *New America*. 16 Oct. 2014.

<sup>8</sup> McCarthy, Eli. "Religious Leaders Urge a JustPeace Response to ISIS." *Huffington Post*. 19 Sep. 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Cole, Juan. "Iraq: Bombs & Bullets vs. Political Process." 24 Aug. 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Dahl, Omar. "The refugee crisis in Lebanon and Jordan" *Forced Migration Review*. Sep. 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Miles, Stephen. "Alternatives to Another War." *Huffington Post*. 12 Sep. 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Lister, Charles. "Cutting off ISIS' Cash Flow." *The Brookings Institution*. 24 Oct. 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Simon, Steven and Stevenson, Jonathan. "A New Plan for Syria" *The New York Review of Books*. 26 Sep. 2014

<sup>14</sup> Katulis, Brian. "Defeating ISIS: An integrated strategy". *Center for American Progress*, 10 Sep. 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Ross, Dennis. "A Strategy for Beating the Islamic State." *Politico Magazine*. 2 Sep. 2014.

<sup>16</sup> "The Islamic State: A Long-Term Strategy." *Friends Committee on National Legislation*. 11 Sep. 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Davis, Danny, Lt. Col. "Airstrikes Against ISIS Are Tactics. Here's a Strategy." *The Daily Beast*. 17 Sep. 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Qatari, Hussain and Schreck, Adam. "US Official Urges Allies to Combat IS Ideology." *AP*. 7 Oct. 2014.