

July 10, 2020

Dear Chairmen Smith, McGovern, and Engel, and Ranking Members Thornberry, Cole, and McCaul,

The COVID-19 pandemic is threatening Yemen with millions of infections and tens of thousands of deaths. Even before the pandemic, Yemen's people already had suffered more than five years of brutal warfare, with a quarter-million dead from the effects of conflict – and airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia- and United Arab Emirates-led coalition responsible for the [majority](#) of civilians killed and maimed in direct attacks. An estimated [85,000](#) Yemenis are at risk of death due to the pandemic, adding to the suffering of the Yemeni people while the Yemeni and international parties to the conflict continue to pursue a military solution that does not exist.

As organizations working to halt the war and end the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, we write to urge your support for an amendment to the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act that would pause all transfers of U.S. air-to-ground munitions to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition fighting in the war in Yemen. The House adopted such a provision in the FY2020 NDAA, though it was not included in the final conferenced bill enacted by Congress.

The suspension by Congress of U.S. munitions transfers to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition will prevent further civilian casualties from airstrikes and help to check a dangerous re-escalation of the conflict even as humanitarians push to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. A suspension of U.S. munitions sales to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition also will support UN-led efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict, by making clear to the parties to the conflict that the U.S. Congress expects them to urgently pursue a political settlement rather than continuing futile efforts to achieve their goals through the use of military force.

Even as local and international organizations strive to address a surging COVID-19 pandemic through an underfunded humanitarian response, airstrikes by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition continue to kill and injure Yemeni civilians. Saudi Arabia bombed Yemen's capital Sana'a [on July 1](#), reportedly injuring civilians, and a June 15 Saudi airstrike [killed](#) 13 civilians in northern Yemen, including four children. According to recent reports, the Trump Administration is considering a new [sale](#) of nearly \$500 million in munitions; this would undermine efforts to secure an end to the war in Yemen.

Only through a political settlement can the humanitarian crisis in Yemen be resolved. Action by Congress to suspend munitions transfers to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition will not, by itself, end Yemen's war. But it will give weight to Congress's insistence that the Saudi/UAE-led coalition de-escalate the conflict and commit to ending a war that has devastated Yemen.

Much more needs to be done to protect civilians, de-escalate the violence, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, and hold accountable those who have violated the laws of war. But by suspending the export of U.S. air-to-ground munitions to the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, Congress can take a productive step toward the resolution of the crisis. We urge you to support such a provision in this year's NDAA.

Sincerely,

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| 1. Action Corps | 9. Friends Committee on National | 16. Refugees International |
| 2. American Friends Service | Legislation | 17. Saferworld |
| Committee | 10. Human Rights First | 18. STAND: The student-led movement |
| 3. Amnesty International USA | 11. Indivisible | to end mass atrocities |
| 4. Avaaz | 12. Peace Direct | 19. Win Without War |
| 5. Center for Civilians in Conflict | 13. Physicians for Human Rights | 20. Yemen Relief and Reconstruction |
| 6. Center for International Policy | 14. Project on Middle East Democracy | Foundation |
| 7. Demand Progress | 15. Quincy Institute for Responsible | |
| 8. Freedom Forward | Statecraft | |