

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: A HUGE victory in the fight to end U.S. complicity in Yemen

The Takeaway:

- This week, Joe Biden announced an end to all offensive U.S. military support for the Saudi- and UAE-led intervention in Yemen. This is a *massive* win!
- This victory was made possible by a years-long struggle and sustained grassroots mobilization in Yemen, the United States, Europe, and around the world. This is the power of a transnational movement for peace.
- The fight goes on. We must ensure that this is a comprehensive end to all U.S. support for the intervention and other harmful policies to finally reorient U.S. policy to advance a positive peace. But this week's victory makes clear: our movement has power. We believe that we will win.

The Beginning of the End to U.S. Complicity in Yemen

U.S. support for the Saudi- and UAE-led intervention in the war in Yemen has long been a microcosm of all that is wrong with the U.S. foreign policy. It's based on kneejerk militarism, misplaced definitions of "allies" and "enemies," and callous indifference to human needs. It's fueled in part by the profit motive of the arms industry, special interest lobbyists, and misperceptions of national interests. It was launched under the cover of darkness with no consultation with the public or Congress. And it has, by all accounts, been an utter failure — as President Biden put it, "a moral and strategic catastrophe."

But now — finally — it's changing.

A Promise Fulfilled

Early in his candidacy for president, Joe Biden promised to end U.S. support for the war in Yemen in pursuit of a foreign policy that lives up to the United States' professed values. This week, he made good on that promise. During a broader [speech](#) on his vision for U.S. foreign policy, Biden [committed](#) to "ending all American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen, including relevant arms sales." This is, unequivocally, a [MASSIVE victory](#) — there's more work to do, but this alone is well worth celebrating.

A Hard-Fought Victory

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This dramatic shift in policy would not have been possible without years of struggle and the tireless efforts of progressive leaders, Yemeni advocates, and activists across the country and from around the world. Win Without War is honored to have been there from the early days of public opposition. Starting in 2016, we worked closely with progressives in Congress like Reps. John Conyers, Ted Lieu, and Sen. Chris Murphy when U.S. involvement under President Obama was still largely a

secret and even unsuccessful votes to block weapons sales were considered progress. In 2017, we worked closely with then-new Congressman Rep. Ro Khanna to introduce the first War Powers Resolution on Yemen, sparking changes to oversight and exposing the horrifying degree of U.S. complicity that even some members of Congress and their staff were not aware of.

A year later, Senators Bernie Sanders and Mike Lee joined Sen. Murphy to pick up the legislation in the Senate, and finally, in 2019, both houses of Congress passed a historic War Powers Resolution on Yemen – the [first time](#) the Vietnam-era law had successfully passed both chambers. This was followed by repeated bipartisan majority votes to block weapons transfers to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. While this legislation ultimately went on to be vetoed by Trump, our movement worked tirelessly every step of the way to fight for peace. Though the path was not straight, and the end result was not preordained, all of these and more helped build to the policy change victory that we saw yesterday.

SELECT PAST LEGISLATIVE ACTION ON YEMEN

- **June 2016:** House votes on amendment to Defense Appropriations to block cluster bombs to Saudi Arabia.
- **August 2016:** Senate votes on resolution of disapproval to block tank sale.
- **June 2017:** Senate votes on resolution of disapproval to block PGM sale.
- **March 2018:** Senate votes on War Powers Resolution.
- **December 2018:** Senate **passes** War Powers Resolution, S.J. Res. 54; Speaker Paul Ryan blocks vote on House War Powers Resolution.
- **April 2019:** House **passes** War Powers Resolution; Trump subsequently vetoes it.
- **May 2019:** Senate **fails** to override presidential veto of War Powers Resolution.
- **July 2019:** Multiple amendments to H.R. 2500 and the FY20 NDAA pass, effectively prohibiting funds or weapons support to the Saudi- and Emirati-led war in Yemen.
- **Jan. 2020:** The Trump administration designates Yemen's Houthi movement a terrorist organization.

The Power of a Movement

But this win didn't emerge from the halls of Congress alone. It was a victory of a [movement](#). When the people of the United States and beyond found out that their governments were enabling famine and massacres in their names, they *showed up* for change: humanitarians, peacebuilders, and anti-war advocates; activists in the United States and Europe, following the leadership of Yemenis and Yemeni-Americans; [politicians](#), reporters, and organizers; libertarians, liberals, and leftists; from Washington to Sanaa — the movement to end U.S. military role in the war in Yemen broke down silos and spanned the ideological spectrum. From petitions and letters, to protests and media [campaigns](#), to investigative reporting and groundbreaking legislation, this broad movement worked together to expose the human costs of the United States' role in aiding and abetting an air campaign littered with apparent war crimes.

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This is a story of grassroots power effecting change from the outside, and pushing forward policy change inside the halls of Congress. This win was built by a movement. And, having signed petitions 329,044 times, sent 203,075 letters, made 5,282 calls, and submitted 1,497 letters to the editor, Win Without War activists were an integral part (even [the Hulk](#) thinks so).

The Devil is in the Details

An end to all offensive U.S. military support is something most in Washington once thought impossible. But many questions remain about how this will work in practice. What qualifies as “offensive” operations? What are “relevant” arms sales? Far too often, we’ve seen weapons actively used to kill and cause harm laughably labeled “defensive.” We must be clear from the start that an end to U.S. complicity in Yemen must mean an end to [all](#) support for the intervention: all weapons sales, all “intelligence” sharing, all logistical support — everything. Oh, and Reaper drones and F-35s are *not* defensive weapons.

A Positive Peace

The reversal of destructive policy does not, on its own, constitute peace, healing, or justice for the Yemenis who have long suffered as a result of U.S. intervention. As we look to what’s next after this stunning victory, we must begin the work of building a *positive* peace. With Biden’s announcement, he has already committed to a few steps toward that goal: the appointment of a career foreign service Special Envoy for Yemen, [Timothy Lenderking](#), support for a UN-led ceasefire, the opening of humanitarian channels, the restoration of peace talks, and a commitment to humanitarian aid and diplomacy. This would be an excellent start. At the same time, after years of wreckage, we must go further:

- The revocation of dubious Houthi terror [designations](#) and full restoration and increase of humanitarian assistance across the country;
- An end to the coalition’s air, sea, and naval blockade that continue to hamper imports of food, fuel, and medicine;
- A permanent end to U.S. drone strikes, special operations raids, and partner operations that are implicated in mass, gross violations of human rights and continue to destabilize the country;
- Investigation and accountability for past violations of international and domestic law from U.S.-made weapons and U.S. partners;
- Support for a robust, multilateral, locally-led peace process that centers civil society, especially including women, youth, and religious minorities and focuses on inclusive peace and accountability since Yemen’s revolution began in 2011;
- Multilateral diplomacy for a new UN Security Council Resolution that prioritizes inclusive peace, local conflict resolution mechanisms, and builds on the commitments made during Yemen’s National Dialogue process;
- Building support for a multilateral, UN trust to fund Yemen’s recovery and reconstruction that prioritizes flexible grant-making to local Yemeni peacebuilders and instills robust

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corruption controls to help depoliticize aid and ensure it reaches those who most need it; and

- Creative, locally-informed and -led solutions to resolve some of the existential crises facing Yemen's future: from quickly declining water resources to one of the highest rates of weapons per capita in the world.

These are only some ideas that we know are necessary for the United States to play a credible role for peace in Yemen. Yesterday's action was only the first step on the path to a total transformation of U.S. foreign policy in Yemen and beyond.

This week's announcement is a sign of the great power that our movement has collectively built. And it's only the beginning.

Leaders in the Fight

We're proud of Win Without War's role in this struggle. But the true leaders were the Yemeni and Yemeni diaspora organizations who forged the path ahead. Here are just a few – but by no means all – that we are eternally grateful for:

- [Mwatana Organization for Human Rights](#)
- [Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies](#)
- [The Yemen Cultural Institute for Heritage and the Arts](#)
- [Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation](#)
- [Yemeni Alliance Committee](#)
- [Yemen Aid](#)

BURIED LEDES

Myanmar's military launched a [coup](#) against the legitimately-elected NLD government, reversing years of hard-fought democratization. The U.S. should act to hold the *specific* individuals responsible accountable, but it must be careful not to use blunt tools, such as broad-based sanctions, that could harm the people themselves.

Trump's "maximum pressure" policy was a catastrophic failure. **It's time for a [new approach](#) to bring peace to the Korean peninsula.**

This Tuesday, **Joe Biden announced new efforts to address the "root causes" of the migration crisis.** It's the right approach, but for it to succeed, we must [recognize](#) and deal with the United States' own role in fueling inequality, poverty, and violence.

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U.S. support for the war in Yemen may be over, but the power of the arms industry lives on. Read our Shayna Lewis on why **Arizonans should [reject](#) their state's deep ties to weapons manufacturer Raytheon.**

Trump tried his best to undermine the regulation of nuclear weapons. But this week, **Biden [announced](#) the extension of the New START treaty with Russia**, beginning the process of undoing Trump's harm.

So far, Biden's done a fair bit to reverse Trump's disastrous foreign policy decisions. But what's his grand strategy? **What's next for the new administration? Our own Kate Kizer [weighs in](#).**

It's been 13 years since then-candidate Obama promised to close Guantanamo Bay. **We joined over 100 organizations in [calling on](#) Biden to make it finally happen.**

Two left-wing political activists in El Salvador were [murdered](#) this week as a part of a growing violence incited by President Bukele — the very same government that the United States [backs](#) with weapons and security aid.

"The Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, white supremacy, and economic deprivation all [pose](#) greater threats to our immediate and long-term safety and security than great power competition does." Enough said.

And finally, **[some](#) news for the DC [statehood](#) fans.**