

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: Justice For Yemen

The Takeaway:

- This week, hundreds of activists joined Win Without War and leading Yemeni experts to discuss the victories of the movement for peace and justice in Yemen, the current state of the conflict in Yemen, and where the movement must go from here.
- President Biden's announcement of an end to U.S. support for offensive operations in Yemen was a monumental victory, and a clear sign of our power as a movement. But that alone is not enough to ensure lasting peace and justice for Yemen.
- We need more than mere tweaks to the status quo. To make the United States a credible actor for peace in Yemen, Biden must adopt a transformative new approach.

Justice For Yemen: Where do we go from here?

Last month, President Biden announced that his administration would be ending U.S. support for offensive operations in Yemen. After six years of complicity in devastating violence, this was a great victory. But our fight did not end there.

Yesterday, Win Without War hosted a [webinar](#) with three leading Yemeni experts — Policy & Advocacy Lead of Oxfam in Yemen [Abdulwasea Alsocotri](#), Assistant Professor of Michigan State University [Dr. Shireen Al-Adeimi](#), and Director of the Yemen Cultural Institute for Heritage & the Arts [Sama'a Al-Hamdani](#) — along with hundreds of grassroots activists, to answer a simple question: What's next? Moderated by Win Without War Policy Director Kate Kizer, the discussion laid out the current state of the situation in Yemen, explored how last month's victory was won, and charted the path forward to finally achieving peace and justice in Yemen.

Here's what we learned: (*Note: the views expressed here represent Win Without War's alone, not necessarily that of all webinar participants*)

Unimaginable Conditions

Yemen today is the world's largest humanitarian crisis. 20 million people are food insecure, four million have been [displaced](#) from their homes, and countless more continue to face living conditions that Abdulwasea Alsocotri described as "[unimaginable](#)." On top of the already

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deadly conditions of war, famine, cholera, and dengue fever, Alsocotri warns that today **“the threats of conflict, COVID-19, extreme hunger and more are only growing worse.”**

Six Years of Complicity

How did Yemen get to this tragic state? In part because, for six long years, the United States has played an active role in supporting the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition’s disastrous intervention in the country. Having already been a destabilizing force in Yemen since [at least 2002](#) through “counter-terror” [operations](#) and drone warfare, the United States opened a new front in Yemen in 2015, when it began transferring weapons, fueling aircraft, providing intelligence, and otherwise actively backing the coalition’s campaign of violence. This has continued through three successive administrations, long after it became clear that the United States was directly responsible for immeasurable suffering and, in the words of Sama’a Al-Hamdani, that **“violence would not stop violence.”**

Movement Victories

Since getting into office, President Biden has taken laudable steps toward changing this destructive approach, including last month’s [announcement](#) of an end to support for “offensive operations” and the [reversal](#) of harmful terrorist designations of certain parties to the conflict. These policy changes have real, substantive benefits for people in Yemen, and signal a growing recognition that the previous approach to Yemen was a total failure. Such meaningful victories would not have been possible without years of organizing by the anti-war movement and activists like you.

Arsonists and Firefighters

But these steps alone are not enough. As Dr. Shireen Al-Adeimi notes, **“Despite recent promises — and there have been positive developments — the war is still going and the bombs are still dropping with U.S. support, even if that support looks a little different.”** In fact, it seems that the administration’s words were carefully chosen so as to create a false distinction between “offensive” and “defensive” operations in Yemen and justify continued participation. Despite [grassroots pressure](#), the administration still has not fully canceled \$36.5 billion in pending weapons transfers to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, instituted a much-needed indefinite ban on further transfers, or committed to ending its own “counter-terror” campaign of drone strikes and covert special operations actions. Before we can even begin to consider the United States playing a credible role in creating peace in Yemen, we must first end *all* facets of ongoing complicity in the violence — or, as Dr. Al-Adeimi put it: **“we can’t put out the fire while arsonists are still at work, and we can’t expect the arsonists to turn around and become firefighters either.”**

A Positive Force for Peace

“We have to ask,” said Ms. Sama’a Al-Hamdani **“is the United States just interested in ending its own role, or is it truly interested in the wellbeing of 30 million Yemenis who**

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need a just participant in the process for peace?” Once the United States is no longer fueling the violence in Yemen, it can begin to become a positive force for peace. That means:

1. Pushing for a nationwide ceasefire, and an end to restrictions on humanitarian and commercial movement, including the deadly coalition blockade.
2. Promoting an internationally-backed but *locally-led* peace process that goes beyond just the parties to the conflict and brings to the table those long-ignored: Yemen’s robust technocratic civil service, diverse small business and entrepreneurial community, women- and youth-led civil society, and political and grassroots organizations.
3. Investing deeply in humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts both as its own good and as reparations for harms done.
4. Committing to accountability for those responsible — both within and outside of Yemen.

For more details on what the administration should do next on Yemen, [read](#) our own Kate Kizer in *Inkstick*.

The Latest Developments

This week, developments on the ground in Yemen gave a few, minor reasons for hope. Saudi Arabia first [reiterated](#) its support for a UN-backed ceasefire, and then allowed four ships to [bypass](#) its blockade and dock at Hodeidah, providing much-needed fuel to a nation in need. However, four ships of fuel is far from sufficient to a nation in crisis, and when it comes to the UN plan, in an all-too-painful pattern in this conflict, diplomats’ promises of support for a process come much more easily than actual commitment to a detailed plan. In the meantime, the bombs continue to fall, and the suffering continues.

What’s Next?

The path ahead of us may be daunting. But if last month’s announcement showed anything, it is that *we are powerful*. And with hundreds of people lining up to attend this week’s webinar, and countless more continuing to take action with Win Without War and other organizations, it’s clear that our movement is *fired up* to keep up the pressure. In the words of our Kate Kizer: **“President Biden faces a choice: continue with only minor tweaks to the failed status quo, or recognize the need for transformative change to make the United States a truly credible actor for peace.”** Together, we can make sure he makes the right decision. Start by watching the webinar in full [here](#), then [take action](#) to make your voice heard for peace and justice in Yemen.

BURIED LEDES

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After years of tireless advocacy, **Rep. Barbara Lee's bill to repeal the 2002 Iraq War AUMF [advanced](#) out of committee with bipartisan support.** Dear Congress: today is a beautiful day to **stop giving the president a blank check for endless war.**

We all know the U.S. spends too much on weapons of war and too little on measures that will actually keep people safe. Well here's one step toward changing that: **Senator Ed Markey and Rep. Ro Khanna introduced the aptly named bill, Investing in Cures Before Missiles (or ICBM) to [move](#) \$1 billion from nuclear missile to vaccine production.**

Here's one key to fixing U.S. foreign policy: put feminism at its core. Earlier this month, Yifat Susskind and Diana Duarte of MADRE guest-authored a Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief on feminist foreign policy. Now, it's published and ready to be shared [here](#).

After 4 years of incompetence and fearmongering about China, **U.S.-China diplomacy under Biden is [not off to the best start](#).** The U.S. can still address very real concerns with China while being less confrontational. We should approach diplomacy with a little more humility.

In Burma, the military continues to crack down on protesters, **[imposing an internet blackout and martial law, and taking hundreds of lives.](#)** The U.S. must continue to push for accountability, and, in a positive step, **Biden has [sanctioned two more companies](#) linked to coup leaders.**

The U.S. military has [started training marines](#) in Mozambique, who have been working with South African mercenaries accused of human rights abuses. This could also interfere with negotiations and humanitarian aid. How about...we stop exporting our failed "counterterrorism" strategies?

Soil from the site of a new U.S. airbase to be built on Okinawa, Japan [contains the remains](#) of people who died in WWII. Expanding U.S. militarism at this very site adds insult to injury for those who lost their lives — yet construction continues.

U.S. militarism kills — in more ways than one. **The U.S. military has been secretly [burning extremely toxic chemicals](#)** (to no end) and endangering our communities, farms, and water.

Promises are made to be kept. Here's looking at you, Joe Biden. Despite campaigning that the U.S. should not "check its values at the door to sell arms" — **Biden is [poised to continue an expansive Trump policy that allows the U.S. to sell drones to pretty much any country](#)** in violation of a UN agreement that the U.S. helped negotiate.

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So far, **President Biden has [failed](#) to fulfill a number of key campaign promises on foreign policy, including rejoining the Iran nuclear deal.** Why? “There’s this fear of being attacked on the right,” says our Executive Director Stephen Miles. “There doesn’t seem to be as much concern about the overwhelming majority of the Democratic Party.”

ICYMI: We propose [a new U.S. strategy](#) to prevent atrocities. **Only by [reforming our approach to violence](#) writ large can we play a credible role in building human security this century.**

And finally, [dinosaurs!](#) **And how to decolonize dino digging and deal with fossils ethically.**