

The Headline

Last week, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and his GOP allies voted to remove Congresswoman Ilhan Omar from the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC). The GOP may attempt to sell this as retribution for the removal of MAGA-conspiracy theorists from committees under former Democratic Speaker Pelosi's watch, but the actual message Speaker McCarthy and his allies sent was clear: Republican extremists do not welcome an outspoken, Black, Muslim woman who prioritizes people over the military-industrial complex.

Progressives – and indeed the entire Democratic caucus – resoundingly denounced the idea that Rep. Omar doesn't belong on HFAC. Every House Democrat voted against removing her, and colleagues gave impassioned speeches lauding her leadership on foreign policy. On the grassroots side, Win Without War and MPower Change led over 90 organizations in the progressive, human rights, and foreign policy space in [condemning](#) Congresswoman Omar's removal. The breadth of signatories to the statement clearly demonstrates that Rep. Omar has a powerful force behind her and regardless of her position on HFAC her leadership will remain welcome throughout D.C. and beyond. The HFAC removal is not the end of her foreign policy leadership – these groups made it clear that it will be just the beginning.

Still, her removal is a cause for sadness. The House Foreign Affairs Committee is losing a key voice. Remember, Rep. Omar is the one who used her position on HFAC to [grill](#) Elliott Abrams over his corrupt past when former President Trump nominated him as the Venezuela Envoy. She also used her position to advocate for [transforming](#) the way the U.S. engages with African countries, calling for the U.S. to turn away from the status quo of militarized foreign policy and instead pursue a "Marshall Plan for Africa." Her groundbreaking "[Pathway to PEACE](#)" bills aimed to reorient U.S. foreign policy towards human rights and justice. Throughout her work on HFAC, she has been a tireless advocate for the thing U.S. foreign policy institutions fear most: accountability. Speaker McCarthy's cynical move will allow the establishment to sleep slightly sounder, at least for now.

What's next:

Speaker McCarthy played his one card upfront and it only served to unite Democrats. Moving forward, Rep. Omar will still be free to speak up on the issues she cares about and will still be able to influence a powerful wing of the Democratic party as Deputy Chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. We may not have the fiery HFAC hearing highlights, but progressives will have her unapologetic voice in Congress.

The Happenings

February 11th, 1pm ET; February 13th 8:30pm ET; and March 4th 2:00pm ET: Notes from the Edge of Society: community care in the nuclear disarmament movement (three part series!), [Global Zero](#), [New Detroit](#), [PSR](#), [Georgia WAND](#)

February 13th, 9:30am ET: The End of the End of History? Global Implications of the War in Ukraine, [Stimson Center](#)

The Spotlight

In today's spotlight, we interview Mari Faines, [Partner for Mobilization](#) at Global Zero. You can follow her on Twitter [here](#).

1): What was the first moment you realized you were interested in U.S. foreign policy - especially making it more inclusive? Do you have any lessons learned for students or those just starting in a similar career path?

Throughout my childhood my parents made a conscious effort not to shield my brother or I from what was happening around the world. They had two Black children, who were growing up in America. They understood that we weren't always going to grow up seeing ourselves reflected in the world outside our home. They made it their mission to teach us about the world outside of the US borders, reminding us that the world is a diverse place and our fights for safety, equity, and justice are all tethered together.

That being said, if I were to pinpoint a moment where these teachings became salient, it would be my exchange in Casablanca, Morocco in high school. There I noted the correlations between communities in Morocco and communities in Chicago. I grappled with socio-economic disparities, educational equity, and colonial histories that spurred my interest in policy and its implications on people.

It's moments like Morocco, among others, and the teachings of my parents that have helped me want to make this space more inclusive. You can't be what you can't see. I was lucky enough to grow up with mentors like Amb. Bonnie Jenkins; and am often reminded that my mere existence in this field is an act of resilience. My grandmother used to say, "when the door is opened for you, take it off its hinges so others can enter too." I hope that when other young people enter this space they take that thinking to heart, you have every right to be here. And don't shut the door behind you.

2): What about U.S. foreign policy, specifically your work in nuclear policy, do you wish was better understood?

If there were one thing I wish people better understood about nuclear policy it's that PEOPLE are impacted by policy. In nuclear policy, we often get bogged down discussing the weapons

systems, the theories, and the threat of potential use – forgetting to discuss people. But nuclear policy is not only some piece of paper that happens in a vacuum, or only important when a weapon is used. The effects of the nuclear complex are impacting people now. The health and climate impacts have been negatively impacting communities for generations – in many cases, exacerbating the disenfranchisement of vulnerable and marginalized populations.

The harm done to people is not limited to health or climate impacts. It is also the choices the country makes in regards to spending. The United States is on track to spend approximately \$2 trillion over the next 30 years on its nuclear arsenal. Imagine if we invested that money in community care, like education or healthcare.

Nuclear weapons policy and foreign policy in general cannot operate in a silo. Especially one that is only accessible to the DC beltway or the ivory towers of academia. These issues are affecting all people, all the time. If we are going to have a transparent global impact, through our foreign policy and national security strategies, we must delve deeper into research and policy about the human impacts of the nuclear weapons complex. Push ourselves to find more equitable solutions that can help lessen the climate crisis, protect vulnerable populations, and reinvest funds in community safety and care. The challenge is about the people, the opportunity is about humanity.

3): In a [recent piece](#) for *Bulletin for the Atomic Scientists*, you argued “a serious scholarly examination of nuclear weapons policy should also specifically address the effects of colonialism, White supremacy, and racial justice.” Can you elaborate on why this is needed and do you believe the U.S. political establishment has the capability of implementing this vision?

Studies have shown that when a workforce is more diverse, it is more profitable but also innovative and productive. Why wouldn't nuclear policy also benefit from an examination of these problems from a more diverse perspective? These weapons impact all the people in this country, and across the globe, therefore they have the right to engage in the policy around the issue. We must acknowledge the colonial history in this country and across the globe – most importantly its impact on foreign policy choices, including nuclear weapons policy. If we ignore this history, we risk repeating mistakes of the past, making us unable to find just and equitable solutions for the future.

I have to believe that the U.S. political establishment is capable of implementing this vision, because it must be capable of reckoning with its past in order to better serve its future. No

equitable change has ever been pushed forward without some hard truths. This will be no different, but the world of possibilities beyond this moment is well worth it.

Buried Ledes

U.S. weapons left behind during the American withdrawal from Afghanistan are now surfacing in Kashmir. Experts are saying that this may be [“just the start of the weapons’ global journey”](#), reminding us of the global consequences of U.S. militarism.

Amid increasing police violence against protestors in Peru, which has resulted in more than [50 dead](#) and more than 1,000 injured, **20 Democrats [signed and sent a letter](#) urging Biden to halt all security assistance to Peru until the bloody crackdown has ended and Peruvian officials are held accountable for human rights abuses.**

This [New York Times article](#) details how the narrative of a “new Cold War” between the U.S. and China is driving discriminatory state and local laws, demonstrated by recent state efforts to exclude Chinese citizens and companies from purchasing land. Other efforts go beyond targeting Chinese nationals. This is an incredibly dangerous exclusionary and repressive effort rooted in racism and fuels the vicious cycle of U.S.-China confrontation.

Facing limited pathways to enter the U.S., Afghans are traveling across up to [11 Latin American countries](#) before crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, a perilous journey that many other migrants face. To truly enact our responsibility for Afghans following the U.S.’s two-decade-long occupation, protections should be prioritized to facilitate their journeys and asylum-seeking processes.

With the Biden administration recently declaring the end of COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, many expected for Title 42 expulsions to also end in May 2023. **However, the White House recently “walked back” its assertion that the pandemic-era border policy would also end and instead announced that it would wait on the Supreme Court’s ruling on the policy.** This continues to leave migrants and asylum-seekers in limbo and has resulted in [mass expulsions](#) leading to persecution, harassment, rape, and death.

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain has found that many Bahraini political prisoners and prisoners of conscience were unable to resume a normal life after detention due to “[invisible wounds](#)” persisting years after alleged mistreatment. This adds to a pattern of U.S. military and economic partnerships with repressive authoritarian regimes despite clear indications of state abuse.

Pop-Quiz, inspired by last night’s Jeopardy category!: What is the tallest mountain in South America? Give yourself a moment and when you’re ready, you can find the answer [here](#).