



The Hon. Bernie Sanders  
1 Church St., 3rd Floor  
Burlington, VT 05401

July 16, 2021

Dear Senator Sanders:

Thank you for leading the efforts in 2018 and 2019 to send a War Powers Resolution to President Trump's desk and end U.S. complicity in the Saudi-led coalition's horrific war and blockade on Yemen. We, the undersigned Vermont-based organizations, write today to urge you to introduce another War Powers Resolution to end ongoing US military support that is enabling the coalition to continue this war and blockade. While we appreciate President Biden's early attention to Yemen, we believe that the steps taken by his administration thus far are insufficient to address America's ongoing complicity in the war, blockade, and humanitarian crisis there.

According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), 2.3 million Yemeni children under the age of five are suffering from acute malnutrition. 400,000 of these children are at serious risk of dying this year without urgent intervention. Given WFP's warning in March that one Yemeni child is dying every 75 seconds, thousands of these children may have already succumbed to hunger this year. The millions of Yemeni children who continue to battle malnutrition will likely carry physical and cognitive scars for the rest of their lives.

The Saudi-led coalition's blockade is a tactic of offensive, economic warfare and is a major driver of Yemen's hunger crisis. Particularly since January, the coalition has imposed major restrictions on fuel imports into Yemen. In February, zero fuel was allowed to enter into Yemen's major port of Hodeidah. In the months since, fuel import levels have remained far below pre-blockade levels as UN-approved cargo ships remain unable to dock. The resulting fuel crisis has had devastating humanitarian consequences, including hindering vital food shipments and causing hospitals to go without adequate electricity. While we strongly support renewed calls to increase funding for international humanitarian relief efforts, humanitarian aid cannot replace commercial imports. As WFP director David Beasley has said, the blockade must be lifted "immediately" as a "humanitarian act," independent of political negotiations between the warring parties.

In recent months, we've been very happy to see a groundswell of momentum in Congress for ending the blockade. We greatly appreciate all of your support and leadership on recent letters calling on the Biden administration to use US leverage to press Saudi Arabia to lift the blockade, including the 76-member House letter led by Representatives Dingell, Pocan, and Khanna, the 16-member Senate letter led by Senator Warren, and the bipartisan House Foreign Affairs Middle East subcommittee letter. A coalition of 70-plus national advocacy organizations and celebrities also sent a letter urging President Biden to take action to bring about an end to the blockade.

After mounting pressure, Special Envoy Tim Lenderking said “unequivocally” that Saudi Arabia’s restrictions on commercial imports should be lifted and that the restrictions should be taken “off the table” in political negotiations. However, we are deeply disappointed that the Biden administration has thus far not indicated that it is willing to use any of the United States’ vast leverage to compel Saudi Arabia to end its blockade.

Furthermore, the Department of Defense acknowledged in April that the US continues to provide maintenance support and spare parts transfers that enable the Saudi-led coalition to continue offensive operations, including the enforcement of the blockade and continued airstrikes in Yemen. The White House also acknowledged in June that US military personnel are continuing to play an advising role in the coalition’s campaign against the Houthis. Because of the administration’s “disappointing non-answer” to the detailed questions raised in a January letter by 41 members of the House, it remains unclear what if any other forms of military support the US continues to provide to the coalition.

As you know, no US military support for the Saudi-led coalition’s war on Yemen has been authorized by Congress and Congress has repeatedly voted to cut-off this support, including by passing a historic War Powers Resolution in 2019. It’s also clear that no alternative legislative efforts, such as amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act, have been able to generate the kind of media attention and political pressure that is necessary to spur the administration to take action to bring about an end to the Saudi blockade. Further, because the administration has been unable to provide detailed information about the extent of ongoing US support for the coalition, a War Powers Resolution is necessary to prohibit any other forms of military support that may be ongoing or resumed in the future.

At this time, we believe it is urgent for Congress to reassert its constitution war powers to put an end America’s ongoing complicity in the humanitarian crisis that is being driven by the coalition’s war and blockade. We strongly urge you to introduce a Yemen War Powers Resolution to prohibit all forms of US military support that enables the Saudi-led coalition to continue its war and blockade on Yemen.

Sincerely,

1. Action Corps VT
2. Vermonters for Justice in Palestine
3. Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, Burlington Chapter
4. Buddhist Peace Action Vermont
5. Indivisible Calais
6. Rights and Democracy VT
7. Vermont Workers' Center
8. Everyone's Books
9. Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Brattleboro, VT
10. Brattleboro Solidarity