

July 15, 2020

The Honorable Eliot L. Engel, Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee
The Honorable Michael T. McCaul, Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee
The Honorable James E. Risch, Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
The Honorable Bob Menendez, Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chair, House Committee on Oversight and Reform
The Honorable Jim Jordan, Ranking Member, House Committee on Oversight and Reform
The Honorable Nita Lowey, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Ron Johnson, Chairman, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
The Honorable Gary Peters, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members,

We, the undersigned organizations urge you to do everything in your power to press USAID to reverse its [suspension](#) of tens of millions of dollars in congressionally appropriated assistance to Yemen. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, these cuts would have had dire consequences for Yemenis already suffering through the world's largest humanitarian crisis. Now, with the UN recording COVID cases in multiple Yemeni communities, this aid suspension threatens to exacerbate the virus's toll in a country where millions are already immunocompromised from years of war and near-starvation.

COVID's spread in Yemen is evident, with [cases](#) already reported in Hadramout, Aden, and Sana'a; many experts believe the actual numbers are far higher than what's been reported in the press. After five years of brutal warfare, Yemenis are especially vulnerable to this outbreak. As many as 80% of Yemenis, the proportion in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, are currently living with immune systems weakened by hunger and the spread of cholera and other diseases. If infected, they will have access to only half the country's health care facilities – the other 50% having been destroyed or closed because of the conflict. The Saudi and UAE coalition's de facto blockades of Yemen's Red Sea ports and the ongoing closure of Sana'a airport have impeded the flow of humanitarian and commercial food, fuel, and medicine, which has pushed the prices of essential goods out of reach for millions of Yemenis. Aid agencies have described Yemen as the worst place in the world to be a child, with the UNDP reporting that the conflict directly and indirectly claimed the lives of [140,000](#) children under five by the end of 2019 – a stunning number that will only increase if aid remains suspended at this crucial moment.

This needless suffering will only be compounded by the ongoing USAID suspension, which also occurs alongside the World Food Program's announced [50% cut](#) in aid to most of Yemen, the

reduction or [closing](#) of 31 out of 41 major UN aid programs in the country, and the rollback of critical World Health Organization programming. The UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, Lise Grande, was recently [quoted](#) saying, “Yemen needs support now — literally, right now. There are shortages of absolutely everything that’s needed to treat the people who are likely to become ill. There aren’t enough swabs, tests, reagents, hospital beds, ICU beds, ventilators oxygen or protective equipment. The situation is desperate.”

Secretary Pompeo’s recent announcement of a [\\$225 million](#) infusion for WFP programming in Yemen is welcome, but these funds are earmarked for food aid and Yemen also needs emergency medical assistance. The USAID funding must be reinstated for Yemen to meet its essential healthcare needs and provide a more comprehensive COVID-19 response. There are also concerns that this aid will not be evenly distributed to the Houthi-controlled territory where roughly 70% of the population lives. Millions more are needed, in particular, for emergency stocks of personal protective equipment, ventilators, ICU beds, and other vital supplies for Yemen’s battered health care system. The United States, through USAID, is one of the few countries that can mobilize the money and resources to procure and distribute them.

We recognize that the Houthis’ unacceptable obstruction of the international aid response has posed significant challenges to providing principled humanitarian assistance. Other international donors and aid agencies, however, have worked through the UN to successfully push back against Houthi obstruction, including securing the [walk-back](#) of a 2% proposed tax on humanitarian assistance and [biometric accountability](#) measures, without resorting to unilateral, near-blanket suspensions of vital programming. Furthermore, we are alarmed that, regardless of Houthi activity, the brunt of this ongoing suspension will be borne by vulnerable civilians, and not by Houthi officials and commanders.

We look to Congress as a co-equal branch of government to do everything in its power to ensure that all congressionally appropriated USAID funding be released and that the U.S. government exhaust all potential avenues to engage in good-faith diplomacy to address obstruction issues by all parties to the conflict. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We hope you can assist in making these potentially life-saving funds available for immediate use in Yemen.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Action Corps
American Friends Service Committee
Beyond the Bomb
Beyond War and Militarism
Bread for the World
BringOurTroopsHome.US
CASA in Action
Center for International Policy
Charity & Security Network

Chicago Area Peace Action
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy
Churches For Middle East Peace
CODEPINK
Common Defense
Demand Progress
Emgage Action
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Finding Refuge
Foreign Policy for America
Franciscan Action Network
Freedom Forward
Health Alliance International
Historians for Peace and Democracy
Indivisible
Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project
International Action Center
Islamic Society of North America
Islamophobia Studies Center
Jewish World Watch
Just Foreign Policy
Justice Is Global
Knowdrones.com
LaunchGood Inc
Libyan American Alliance
Minnesota Peace Project
MoveOn
National Council of Churches
National Iranian American Council Action
OneHamtramck LLC
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Peace Direct
Presbyterian Church USA
Public Citizen
RootsAction.org
Students for Justice in Palestine
Students for Yemen
The Episcopal Church
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Union for Reform Judaism
Veterans for Peace
Win Without War

Yemen Freedom Council
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation
Yemeni Alliance Committee

Regional Organizations

Alabama

UU Church of Birmingham

Idaho

Action Corps Idaho
Boise Valley Society of Friends
FCNL Boise Advocacy Team
Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship
Idaho Peace Coalition

Michigan

ACCESS
American Human Rights Council (AHRC)
Handala Coalition
Jewish Voice for Peace Detroit
Metro Detroit Democratic Socialists of America
Michigan Jewish Voices for Peace
MSU Students United for Palestinian Rights
Muslim Center Detroit
SAFE
Students for Justice in Palestine at Eastern Michigan University
United States Palestinian Community Network, Detroit Chapter
University of Michigan's Arab American Studies Center

New Jersey

Coalition for Peace Action
Leonia Vigil for Peace
NJ State Industrial Union Council
New Jersey Peace Action
Teaneck Peace Vigil

New York

Genesee Valley Citizens for Peace
Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives
North Country Peace Group

NYC Metro Raging Grannies
NYU for Yemen
Pax Christi Metro New York
Peace Action Bay Ridge
Peace Action Manhattan
Peace Action New York State
South Country Peace Group, Inc.
Syracuse Peace Council
Uptown Progressive Action
Veterans For Peace - NYC Chapter 34
WNY Peace Center

Ohio

Central Ohioans for Peace
Dayton International Peace Museum
Friends Meeting at Oberlin
Peace Resource Center at Wilmington College
Progressive Peace Coalition

Texas

Dallas Peace and Justice Center
El Paso Monthly Meeting - Religious Society of Friends (Quaker)
Friends Meeting of Austin

Wisconsin

Coulee Region Coalition for Palestinian Rights
Friends of Palestine Wisconsin
Jewish Voice for Peace – Milwaukee
Kickapoo Peace Circle
Kickapoo Valley Friends Meeting (Quakers)
Madison-Rafah Sister City Project
Peace Action of WI
United Nations Association of Greater Milwaukee
Wisconsin Friends Action Network (Quakers)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Milwaukee Chapter