

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 18, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20502

The Honorable Jake Sullivan
National Security Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20502

The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
Ronald Reagan Building, Suite 610
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20425

The Honorable Brett McGurk
National Security Council Coordinator for the Middle
East and North Africa
Eisenhower Executive Office Building, Room 251
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

The Honorable Timothy A. Lenderking
U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear President Biden, Advisor Sullivan, Administrator Power, Deputy Assistant McGurk, and Special Envoy Lenderking:

We write to applaud the recent diplomatic progress made by the warring parties in Yemen, and to express our profound hope that the recent visit of Saudi officials to Houthi-controlled Sanaa and prisoner swaps mark the beginning of a major breakthrough in a conflict that has created the world's worst humanitarian crisis. While these developments provide a reason to hope that an end to the 8-year war and humanitarian crisis in Yemen is within reach, we must acknowledge that there are still major obstacles to a lasting settlement that require careful attention and diplomatic engagement from the United States.

First and foremost, we must take a moment to express our deep sadness and sympathy for the victims and all those impacted by the horrifying crush in Sanaa that killed 78 and injured dozens more. The crush – which occurred as hundreds crowded into a narrow street to receive charitable donations worth approximately \$9 from a merchant in celebration of Eid al-Fitr – highlights the level of economic desperation amongst Yemeni civilians and the urgent need for increased humanitarian assistance and an end to the fighting and blockades that are starving the country.

The Saudi-led war and blockade is a leading driver of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The House has repeatedly voted to cut all U.S. military participation for the Saudi-led war,¹ bipartisan legislation in the 117th Congress to terminate U.S. participation in hostilities with the Saudi-led coalition secured over 130 cosponsors in the House and Senate,² while many members of the House and Senate have sent multiple letters urging your

¹ “Release: House passes Khanna amendment to end support for Saudi-led coalition’s war in Yemen,” Office of Rep. Ro Khanna, September 23, 2021, <https://khanna.house.gov/media/press-releases/release-house-passes-khanna-amendment-end-support-saudi-led-coalition-s-war>.

² “H.J.Res.87 - Directing the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities in the Republic of Yemen that have not been authorized by Congress,” <https://www.congress.gov/bills/117/congress/house-joint-resolution/87/cosponsors>; “S.J.Res.56 - A joint resolution directing the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities in the Republic of Yemen that have not been authorized by Congress,” <https://www.congress.gov/bills/117/congress/senate-joint-resolution/56>.

administration to pressure the Saudis to lift the blockade unconditionally — not use it as a bargaining chip in negotiations.³ We are very relieved to see reports that the Saudi government now appears open to doing exactly what we have sought for years.⁴ Recent prisoner releases by both sides and an apparent unilateral alleviation of the Saudi blockade restrictions on Yemen's ports in Hodeida and Aden are early positive signs,⁵ but a final diplomatic resolution that ends the war is still far from certain.⁶

Recent diplomatic progress has provided the United States with a unique window of opportunity to correct its course and stand on the side of the Yemeni people once again. To that end, we urge you to:

1. Clearly and publicly state that the United States will not provide any further support in any form to any faction party to the conflict while diplomatic talks to end the war are ongoing and should they fail to reach a diplomatic settlement and return to armed hostilities.
2. Clearly and publicly state that Yemen belongs to the Yemeni people and only the Yemeni people. They alone have the right to chart their path forward, and foreign attempts to annex their territory, or subvert the right of the Yemeni people to choose their own leaders must be opposed by the United States without exception. Particular attention must be paid to the Saudi and Emirati occupied Yemeni territories of the Socotra and Perim Islands and Al Mahara.
3. Clearly and publicly state that the Saudi blockade of Yemen's ports — a form of collective punishment against innocent Yemenis — must be lifted unconditionally, as global international humanitarian leaders have long sought.
4. Ensure that all factions are cut off from the weapons that they require to continue the bloodletting of the Yemeni people by immediately pausing all weapons sales and military assistance to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and any active member of the Saudi-led coalition until peace is secured and their forces are withdrawn from Yemeni territory, and maintaining American support for the United Nations arms embargo on the Houthis.
5. Support a significant and desperately needed increase in American humanitarian aid to the Yemeni people to ensure that the United States contributes its fair share towards fully funding the international humanitarian response. Increased assistance would provide lifesaving aid to the 14.8 million seriously food insecure Yemenis currently facing hunger, malnutrition and famine. Critically, American

³ “Dingell, Pocan Lead Letter Urging State Department to Help Lift Saudi Blockade of Yemen,” Office of Rep. Debbie Dingell, September 30, 2022, <https://debbiedingell.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=3677>; “Dingell, Pocan, Khanna Lead 76 Members of Congress in Calling on Biden-Harris Administration to Press For End of Yemeni Blockade,” Office of Rep. Debbie Dingell, April 6, 2021, <https://debbiedingell.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2946>; “Warren, Colleagues to Biden Admin: Use All Tools to End Saudi Coalition's Blockade of Yemen,” Office of Sen. Elizabeth Warren, May 20, 2021, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warren-colleagues-to-biden-admin-use-all-tools-to-end-saudi-coalitions-blockade-of-yemen>; “Reps Lieu, Deutch and Wilson lead bipartisan letter to Sec. Blinken on ending Yemen blockade,” Office of Rep. Ted Lieu, April 13, 2021, <https://lieu.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/rep-lieu-deutch-and-wilson-lead-bipartisan-letter-sec-blinken-ending>.

⁴ “Exclusive: Saudi delegation to hold ceasefire talks with Yemen's Houthis in Sanaa -sources,” Reuters, April 7, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-led-coalition-lifts-more-restrictions-yemens-imports-2023-04-07/>.

⁵ “Yemen prisoner exchange begins amid peace talks,” Reuters, April 14, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemen-prisoner-exchange-begins-icrc-2023-04-14/>; “Arrival of two container ships of various commercial goods to Hodeida port,” Yemen News Agency (SABA), April 17, 2023, <https://www.saba.ye/en/news/3235106.htm>; Saudi-led coalition lifts import restrictions in south Yemen,” Reuters, April 7, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/7/saudi-led-coalition-lifts-import-restrictions-in-south-yemen>.

⁶ “Houthi self-contradiction delays signing of peace pact,” Arab News, April 13, 2023, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2286366/middle-east>.

leadership here would encourage other countries to increase their own contributions, multiplying the impact of our own assistance and saving countless lives.

6. Take a leading role in organizing the international community to prepare for and begin the significant reconstruction effort that must take place in Yemen. As history has shown, failing to act swiftly to rebuild after a conflict often has serious negative impacts on the prospects of achieving just and lasting peace and stability. These efforts, which must be led by Yemenis and Yemeni civil society with the support of the international community, will be key to restarting the agricultural sector to address famine conditions and providing economic opportunities outside of fighting in the war itself to ensure that the eventual demobilization of fighters is successful. Failure to do so could be exploited by terrorist groups like Al Qaeda Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS-Yemen for their own aims, putting our own security at risk.

We believe that these steps are crucial to achieving a just and lasting peace in Yemen and ending a dark chapter of American involvement in this horrific crime against the Yemeni people. For our part, we will remain deeply engaged in supporting this renewed momentum for peace, and stand ready to introduce legislation to prevent further U.S. military complicity in the Saudi-led war on Yemen if hostilities resume, including via Congress' authority under the War Powers Act.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this urgent matter and we look forward to partnering with your Administration to support lasting peace in Yemen.

Sincerely,



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



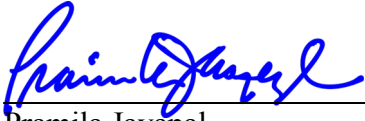
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



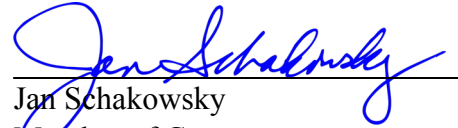
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
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Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



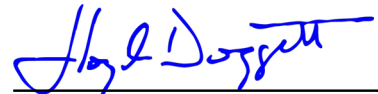
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



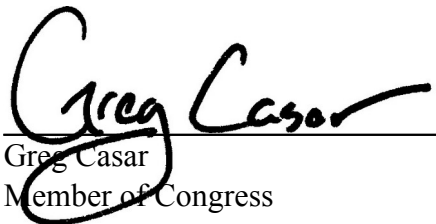
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



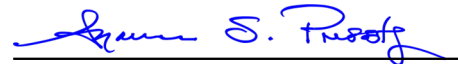
Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



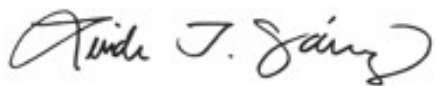
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



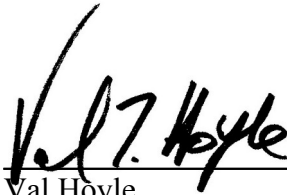
Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



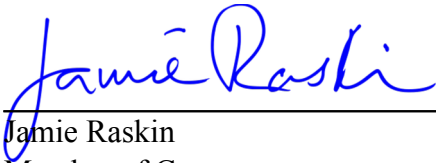
Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



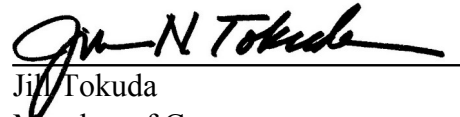
Sherla Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Cori Bush
Member of Congress



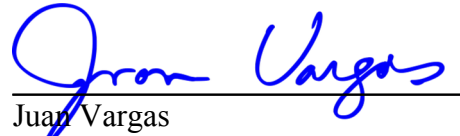
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



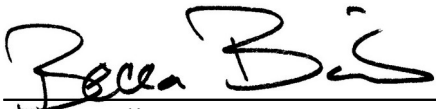
Jim Tokuda
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Debbie Dingell
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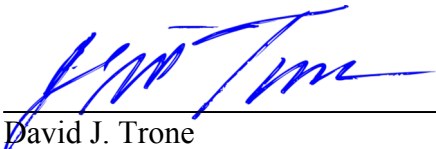
Juan Vargas
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Becca Balint
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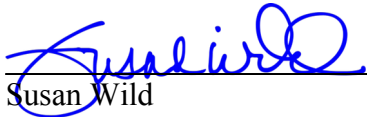
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



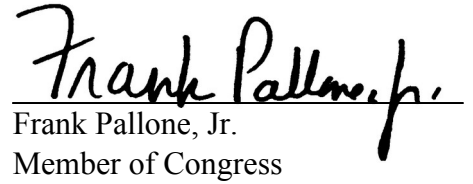
David J. Trone
Member of Congress



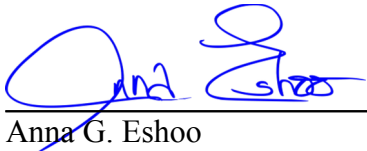
Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



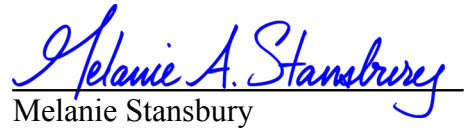
Susan Wild
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress