

May 21, 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 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  
CASA in Action  
Center for International Policy  
Charity & Security Network  
Chicago Area Peace Action

Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy  
Churches of 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  
RootsAction.org  
Students for Justice in Palestine  
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**

### ***Michigan***

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

### ***Wisconsin***

Peace Action of WI  
United Nations Association of Greater Milwaukee  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Milwaukee Chapter.