

June 8, 2017

Dear Senator,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge you to block the recently-notified direct commercial sale of \$510 million worth of precision-guided munitions to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by co-sponsoring and voting for the bipartisan resolution of disapproval introduced in the Senate (S.J.Res.42). Congress must send a clear signal to the administration that US support for the Saudi-led coalition's intervention in Yemen is not unconditional and that the conduct of our foreign affairs is a moral, and not merely a transactional, endeavor. Moving forward with this sale will exacerbate the already dire humanitarian crisis in Yemen, which has left more than 7 million civilians on the brink of famine, at least 8,000 thousand dead and 44,000 injured from conflict, nearly 20 million people facing extreme hunger, and 19 of the country's 21 governorates country facing an unprecedented cholera epidemic that is spiraling out of control.<sup>i</sup>

This planned sale reverses the previous administration's decision to withhold munitions sales to Saudi Arabia due to grave concerns about the use of US-sold weapons in coalition airstrikes.<sup>ii</sup> Despite increased US support in the form of training and smarter weaponry to lessen civilian casualties, it has become clear that several unaddressed flaws in Saudi Arabia's targeting process, not the precision of the munition or targeting skill, are the principal cause of harm to civilians and civilian objects from airstrikes.<sup>iii</sup> According to analysis released by the American Bar Association, resuming unconditional sales of these weapons to Saudi Arabia violates the Arms Export Control Act and the Foreign Assistance Act.<sup>iv</sup>

The United Nations<sup>v</sup> and numerous human rights organizations<sup>vi</sup> have documented continued violations of the laws of armed conflict and human rights by all parties to the conflict, including the Saudi-led coalition. Coalition airstrikes have struck hospitals and schools, as well as sanitation systems, bridges, and Yemen's vital Hodeidah port – the main entry point for food, medicine and humanitarian aid for the majority of Yemenis.<sup>vii</sup> These airstrikes,<sup>viii</sup> have played a substantial role in triggering the largest humanitarian crisis in the world.<sup>ix</sup> Selling more precision-guided weapons will enable Saudi Arabia to continue destroying critical infrastructure and will sustain its seemingly indefinite military campaign. The price will ultimately be paid in Yemeni lives.

At a time when the president appears to have solidified a transactional approach to foreign affairs, it is incumbent upon Congress to ensure that moral concerns, particularly America's commitment to defending human rights, remain a cornerstone of US foreign policy. Allowing the sale to move forward would signal that Saudi Arabia will not face even modest, reversible consequences for committing human rights violations and ignoring US diplomatic entreaties in Yemen. We strongly urge you to use your authority to block this unconditional weapons sale to Saudi Arabia.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)  
Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)  
Arabian Rights Watch Association  
Arms Control Association  
Cambridge United for Justice with Peace  
Center for International Policy  
Chicago Area CODEPINK  
Chicago Area Peace Action  
Circles of Nonviolence/Community Collaboratives Initiative  
Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)  
CODEPINK  
CREDO  
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)  
Global Progressive Hub  
Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project  
J Street  
Jewish Voice for Peace  
Just Foreign Policy  
LEPOCO Peace Center, Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern  
Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives  
Massachusetts Peace Action  
Military Families Speak Out  
MLK Coalition of Greater Los Angeles  
Muslims United for Justice  
Nonviolence International  
OMNI Center for Peace, Justice & Ecology  
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Oxfam  
Peace Action  
People Demanding Action  
Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)  
STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities  
Topanga Peace Alliance  
Tri-Valley CAREs  
United for Peace and Justice  
Wasatch Coalition for Peace and Justice, Salt Lake City  
Western States Legal Foundation  
Win Without War  
WNY Peace Center  
Wolf's Enterprises Human and Civil Rights Advocacy  
Yemen Peace Project

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- <sup>i</sup> Gladstone, Rick. “UNICEF Fears Yemen Cholera Outbreak Could Hit 300,000 in Coming Weeks”, *The New York Times*, 2 June 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/02/world/middleeast/unicef-yemen-cholera-saudi-war.html>
- <sup>ii</sup> Stewart, Phil, and Strobel, Warren. “U.S. to halt some arms sales to Saudi, citing civilian deaths in Yemen campaign”, *Reuters*, 13 December 2016. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-saudi-arabia-yemen-exclusive-idUSKBN1421UK>
- <sup>iii</sup> Pecquet, Julian. “Congress prepares for another showdown over Saudi arms sales”, *Al Monitor*, 9 March 2017. Available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2017/03/congress-showdown-saudi-arms-sales-bombs-yemen.html>
- <sup>iv</sup> Newton, Michael (LTC U.S Army, ret.), “Assessment of the Legality of Arms Sales to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Context of the Conflict in Yemen”, *American Bar Association Center for Human Rights*, 19 May 2017. Available at: [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/human\\_rights/ABACHRAssessmentofArmsSalestoSaudiArabia.authcheckdam.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/human_rights/ABACHRAssessmentofArmsSalestoSaudiArabia.authcheckdam.pdf)
- <sup>v</sup> UN Panel of Experts on Yemen, “Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen”, *UN Security Council*, 27 January 2017. Available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/letter-dated-27-january-2017-panel-experts-yemen-addressed-president-security-council>
- <sup>vi</sup> “Yemen: No Accountability for War Crimes”, *Human Rights Watch*, 12 January 2017. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/01/12/yemen-no-accountability-war-crimes>; “Yemen: Multibillion-dollar arms sales by USA and UK reveal shameful contradiction with aid efforts”, *Amnesty International*, 23 March 2017. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/yemen-multibillion-dollar-arms-sales-by-usa-and-uk-reveal-shameful-contradiction-with-aid-efforts/>
- <sup>vii</sup> “Everyday Things are Getting Worse: The Impact on Children of Attacks on Health Care in Yemen”, *Save the Children & Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict*, April 2017. Available at: <http://www.savethechildren.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2212-Watchlist-Field-Report-Yemen.pdf>
- <sup>viii</sup> Jazairy, Special Rapporteur Idriss, “Lift blockade of Yemen to stop ‘catastrophe’ of millions facing starvation, says UN expert”, *United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, 12 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21496&LangID=E>
- <sup>ix</sup> “Yemenis suffer from the largest humanitarian crisis in the world”, *International Rescue Committee*, 20 March 2017. Available at: <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/yemenis-suffer-largest-humanitarian-crisis-world>