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.¹

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.² 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.³ 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.⁴

The United Nations⁵ and numerous human rights organizations⁶ 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.⁷ These airstrikes,⁸ have played a substantial role in triggering the largest humanitarian crisis in the world.⁹ 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