Oppose Arms Deals to Saudi Arabia

The War in Yemen: A Humanitarian Catastrophe

Since March 2015, the U.S. has been supporting a Saudi-led intervention in Yemen’s civil war. According to the United Nations, a minimum of 10,000 civilians have been killed or injured in the fighting in Yemen. The U.N. has repeatedly reported that the U.S.-backed Saudi-led coalition is responsible for roughly two-thirds of civilian casualties in the war. U.S. military support has facilitated the destruction of Yemen’s civil infrastructure, exacerbated an already devastating humanitarian crisis, and empowered terrorist organizations. U.S. efforts to pressure Saudi Arabia to avoid civilian casualties, facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid, and negotiate a diplomatic solution in good faith have failed in part because we have not conditioned our military support on Saudi Arabia’s follow through with those requests. Evidence of that failure is readily available given the latest string of coalition bombings that have hit a school, a marketplace, a food factory, a hospital supported by Doctors Without Borders, and a bridge that was critical to the delivery of humanitarian aid, all in the month of August.


- The New York Times has reported that the U.S.-backed intervention has allowed affiliates of ISIS and Al Qaeda to expand their territories in Yemen.
- A survey published earlier this year found that 82 percent of Yemenis from the ages of 18-24 consider the U.S. an enemy, a sentiment undoubtedly linked to U.S. support for the intervention, and an age group that is an ideal target for recruitment by terrorist groups.

Active U.S. Military Support for this Little-Debated War Has Been Significant

The U.S. has provided the Saudi-led coalition with military support including:

- Providing targeting assistance to the coalition
- Refueling coalition aircraft
- Participating in the naval blockade of Yemen’s ports, which has delayed and blocked critical shipments of humanitarian aid

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1 Norton, Ben, Despite 10,000 Civilian Casualties in Yemen – 13 per day – U.S. Reaffirms Support for Saudi Arabia, Salon, September 2, 2016
3 Al-Batati, Saeed, War in Yemen is Allowing Al Qaeda Group to Expand, New York Times, April 16, 2015
4 Asda’a Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, Inside the Hearts and Minds of Arab Youth, 2016
5 Abi-Habib, Maria, et al., U.S. Widens Role in Saudi-led Campaign Against Houthi Rebels in Yemen, Wall Street Journal, April 12, 2015
6 Michaels, Jim, U.S. Military Refueling Saudi Planes for Yemen Airstrikes, USA Today, April 8, 2015
● Deploying U.S. special operations forces to Yemen to help the coalition fight Al Qaeda factions

**U.S. Arms Sales Are Prolonging the Conflict**

Under President Obama, the administration has offered Saudi Arabia over $115 billion worth of arms, far more than any other administration. Over $20 billion worth of those arms have been offered since the start of the intervention in March 2015. These transfers have already implicated the U.S. in human rights violations and war crimes. This latest proposed sale includes:

- Up to 153 M1A2 Abrams Battle Tanks
- 419 Machine Guns
- 153 Smoke Grenade Launchers
- Ammunition
- Contracts to continue replacing and repairing parts for this equipment
- And more

Some advocates of this sale have argued that it is irrelevant to the concerns of civilian casualties in Yemen because the majority of those casualties were caused by airstrikes made possible by equipment not included in this sale. However rewarding Saudi Arabia’s behavior in this conflict with some of the most advanced weaponry ever invented would further demonstrate that nothing the kingdom does will affect our willingness to sell it weapons. This would undermine the diplomatic process and prolong the war by removing what would otherwise be a strong incentive for Saudi Arabia to negotiate in good faith.

**Steps Members of Congress Can Take to End the Crisis**

- **Write an op-ed or do other media outreach raising concerns about unconditional U.S. support for the war in Yemen and supporting a diplomatic approach.**
  - Raising awareness about the war and the U.S. support role helps create a proper debate. Members can call for an end to unconditional military support and arms sales and for the U.S. to pressure Saudi Arabia to abandon its indiscriminate tactics and negotiate in good faith.

- **Give a floor speech** highlighting the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and supporting suspension of U.S. arms sales and military aid to Saudi Arabia at least until human rights and national security concerns are addressed.

- **Continue to support legislation to cut off arms sales to Saudi Arabia**

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