

April 4, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

We, the undersigned non-governmental organizations, have learned that the White House is expected to sign off on the Pentagon's request for the United States to support the Saudi- and Emirati-led offensive to take control of the seaport and city of al-Hudaydah, which is currently controlled by the Houthi-Saleh alliance.¹ It is our understanding that a major attack on al-Hudaydah is therefore imminent. In addition to providing support for the coalition in the forms of "surveillance, intelligence, refueling and operational planning,"² your administration is also reportedly considering direct US military engagement against the Houthis as part of this offensive.³ We urge you to withhold American support for any offensive against al-Hudaydah.

Speaking in Washington last week, the United Nations special envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, clearly said that it is the UN's position that "no military operations should be undertaken" in al-Hudaydah.⁴ The International Rescue Committee warned, "any disruption of these port facilities would have a catastrophic impact on the people of Yemen – denying food and medicine to civilians already suffering immeasurably."⁵

Seventy percent of imports and humanitarian aid enter the country through al-Hudaydah. Escalating the conflict in this part of the country will cut off that lifeline and threaten the lives of millions of Yemeni civilians, particularly the 7.3 million already on the brink of famine. Should the coalition move forward with the offensive, thousands of civilians are likely to be killed, injured, and displaced. The UN reports that the Saudi-led coalition's efforts to capture smaller cities on the Red Sea coast have already displaced more than 48,000 civilians.⁶

US participation in this offensive not only risks further US complicity in the coalition's violations of international humanitarian law and possible war crimes, but also risks embroiling the US in a costly military campaign with little to no chance of strategic victory, and exacerbating security vacuums that extremist groups like al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) are eager to fill. US and coalition escalation against the Houthis is also likely to increase Iranian influence in Yemen.⁷ Iran views the rebel

¹ Chicago Tribune, "With Trump approval, Pentagon expands warfighting authority," 2 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/ct-trump-pentagon-war-20170402-story.html>

² The Hill, "Trump signals deeper involvement in Yemen," 1 April 2017. Available at: <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/326767-trump-signals-deeper-us-involvement-in-yemen>

³ The Washington Post, "Trump weighs deeper involvement in Yemen war," 26 March 2017. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-weighs-deeper-involvement-in-yemen-war/2017/03/26/b81eecd8-0e49-11e7-9d5a-a83e627dc120_story.html?utm_term=.433b3e9e6534

⁴ Reuters, "U.N. special envoy warns against military operation on Yemen port," 31 March 2017. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-un-idUSKBN1722MW>

⁵ International Rescue Committee, "Bombing port in Yemen further humanitarian catastrophe," 31 March 2017. Available at: <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/bombing-port-yemen-would-further-humanitarian-catastrophe>

⁶ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Yemen: Escalating Conflict – Western Coast Situation Report No. 3," 10 March 2017. Available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-escalating-conflict-western-coast-situation-report-no-3-10-march-2017-enar>

⁷ Fox News, "Warning to the Trump administration: Be careful about Yemen," 28 February 2017. Available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2017/02/28/warning-to-trump-administration-be-careful-about-yemen.html>

movement as a cheap ally in its drive to indirectly confront Saudi Arabia. While Iran has little to lose from the US escalating military involvement in Yemen, America's entrapment in Yemen's civil war would benefit Iran substantially.⁸

The planned offensive will provide limited strategic benefits for the coalition and erode the possibility of a political settlement, while imposing a potentially unbearable burden on the Yemeni people. We urge you to withhold support for the offensive and pressure the coalition to prevent the offensive from going forward.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee
Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
Arab Center for the Promotion of Human Rights (ACPHR)
Arab Rights Watch Association (ARWA)
Center for International Policy
CODEPINK
Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)
Daily Kos
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)
Global Progressive Hub
The Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
Institute of Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project
The Interfaith Peace Network of WNY
Just Foreign Policy
Knowdrones.com
Massachusetts Peace Action
Nonviolence International
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation
Pax Christi International
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Peace Action New York State
Peace Direct
People Demanding Action
Progressive Democrats of America
Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)
Saferworld
September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities
United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ)
US Labor Against the War
Voices for Creative Nonviolence
Wasatch Coalition for Peace and Justice
Win Without War
WNY Peace Center
Women's Action for New Directions
Women's International League for Peace & Freedom US Section
Yemen Peace Project (YPP)

⁸ Just Security, "Hitting Iran Where It Doesn't Hurt: Why U.S. Intervention in Yemen Will Backfire," 8 March 2017. Available at: <https://www.justsecurity.org/38543/hitting-iran-doesnt-hurt-u-s-intervention-yemen-backfire/>