

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 16, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to express our concern about the deteriorating situation in Yemen. We ask you to reconsider U.S. assistance cuts, enhance U.S. aid and diplomacy to counter COVID-19, improve the humanitarian situation, and reinvigorate the United Nations political process to achieve an immediate, nationwide ceasefire and eventual diplomatic solution to the conflict in Yemen.

Before the emergence of COVID-19, Yemen comprised the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Experts warned this environment might allow COVID-19 to “spread faster, more widely and with deadlier consequences than in many other countries.” Tragically, this prediction has borne out. The UN reports Yemen has nearly 2,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 567 deaths. However, the actual number of cases is likely far higher because of sporadic testing and incomplete data, especially in Houthi-controlled territory. As of late June, around 25 percent of confirmed cases in Yemen were fatal, one of the highest COVID-19 mortality rates in the world, and the country possessed a few hundred ventilators for a population of 27.5 million.

A lack of international funding and short-sighted cuts to U.S. assistance exacerbate these trends. On August 18, the UN noted that Yemen is approaching both famine and economic collapse. Only 21 percent of the 2020 humanitarian appeal for Yemen is met, primarily because of a drop in funding from Gulf states. Saudi Arabia has delivered less than five percent of its \$500 million pledge, and neither the United Arab Emirates (UAE) nor Kuwait has pledged or delivered any funding at all. The UN warned that without more funding it will be forced to end treatment for 250,000 malnourished children, cut water and sanitation programs by 50 percent in 15 cities, and terminate medical care for nine million people in Yemen. Airstrikes have damaged or destroyed many of Yemen’s 3,500 medical facilities and only half are fully functioning. As a result, health clinics are overcrowded, and basic medicines and equipment are lacking. Additionally, food insecurity is increasing because of rising prices and a depreciating currency and most Yemenis do not have enough money to meet their basic needs.

In response, we call on you to restore the \$73 million in U.S. assistance suspended in March and press the international community – especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE – to deliver significant contributions to humanitarian funding for Yemen. We also urge you to strongly support UN access to the abandoned oil tanker, *Safer*, off the Yemeni coast. The tanker is believed to contain more than one million barrels of crude oil and has been floating off Ras Issa, a Red Sea oil

terminal, since early 2015. The Houthis must provide UN inspectors immediate access to the tanker to prevent its rupture, which could cause an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe.

We also urge you to enhance diplomacy to reduce the risk of separatism in Yemen and reach a nationwide ceasefire. A failure to implement agreements between the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) have destabilized southern provinces and threatened to fracture Yemen. Moreover, despite sporadic and unilateral ceasefire announcements, UN envoy Martin Griffiths recently asserted that the military situation in Yemen was not improving. Fighting in the Marib region persists and the number of active front lines in Yemen has increased from 33 to 43 since January. Civilians, especially children, remain at risk from the war and nearly one million vulnerable people around Marib are threatened with displacement. Only a ceasefire, gradual de-escalation, persistent diplomacy, and close consultation with diverse Yemeni constituencies, including women and civil society stakeholders, will achieve a durable end to humanitarian strife and the beginning of a peaceful era in a stable, unified Yemen.

The challenges of Yemen are multifaceted and complex. However, progress is impossible without sustained and vigorous U.S. diplomatic engagement. We urge you to reverse U.S. assistance cuts, redouble efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19, mitigate the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe, and advance a political solution to the Yemeni conflict. Congress stands ready to actively assist your efforts to bring peace and stability to the people of Yemen.

Sincerely,

Ted Deutch  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ro Khanna  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ted Lieu  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Tom Malinowski  
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Mark Pocan  
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