

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 25, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Gloria D. Steele
Acting Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
Ronald Regan Building
Washington, D.C. 20523

Dear Secretary Blinken and Acting Administrator Steele,

We are writing in advance of the next international donor conference for Yemen, expected March 1, to urge that you expedite, restore, and expand U.S. humanitarian aid to address the crisis there. We specifically encourage you to reverse the previous administration's suspension of at least \$73 million in assistance to northern Yemen, where 80 percent of Yemenis currently live, and to increase future U.S. contributions.

According to U.N. agencies, "nearly 2.3 million children under the age of five in Yemen are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2021. Of these, 400,000 are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition and could die if they do not receive urgent treatment." Because the developmental effects of malnutrition in children are largely irreversible, such a crisis will perpetuate further suffering and need in the future. Furthermore, the international humanitarian response remains critically underfunded: the U.N.'s 2020 Humanitarian Response plan received just \$1.9 billion of the \$3.4 billion needed, which led to the cancellation and curtailment of life-saving programs.

We are well aware that the Houthi faction is responsible for persistent obstruction and manipulation of humanitarian assistance. We deplore these acts, just as we condemn the Houthi offensive on Marib province, and numerous other Houthi actions that violate human rights and undermine prospects for peace and stability in both Yemen and the wider region. We commend humanitarian organizations for having undertaken stringent measures to prevent fraud or obstruction of aid from reaching those in northern Yemen and we encourage their continued vigilance. Moreover, we applaud your decision to revoke the terrorist designation of the Houthis, which would have only worsened the present humanitarian catastrophe without meaningfully effecting the group's behavior, and to reenergize diplomatic efforts in pursuit of a lasting political solution to the conflict.

However, the United States should go further and lead the international community's response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis. That starts with restoring the \$73 million in U.S. assistance to Yemen withheld by the previous administration and increasing our pledge at the upcoming donor conference to at least 2018-2019 levels. The renewal of U.S. humanitarian aid is vital to encourage other countries to meet their pledges, both at the March conference and in the future.

In addition, we understand from U.N. agencies that it is important for donors to frontload funding because of the drastic shortfall last year.

In addition, we encourage you to press key international donors to make up the current funding deficit for malnutrition treatment programs. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait contributed significantly less in 2020 to the U.N. Humanitarian Appeal for Yemen than in years past and must bear a greater share of this cost by also restoring their pledges to 2018-2019 levels and expediting disbursement. Finally, we encourage you to press members of the Saudi-led coalition to end restrictions on commercial and humanitarian shipments in and out of Yemen. These restrictions wreak havoc on Yemen's economy, driving up the price of food in a malnourished country that imported 90 percent of its food prior to the conflict.

Thank you for your urgent attention on this crisis. We are ready and eager to work with the administration on leveraging U.S. influence to achieve a diplomatic resolution and improve humanitarian conditions in Yemen. The situation requires nothing less.

Sincerely,

Ted Deutch
CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE
MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND
GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM

Gerald E. Connolly
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

David N. Cicilline
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ted Lieu
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Colin Allred
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Tom Malinowski
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