

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

April 6, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We greatly appreciate your first steps toward ending U.S. support for the war in Yemen, including announcing an end to U.S. military participation in offensive Saudi actions; a review of weapons sales to Saudi Arabia for use in its six-year air war in Yemen; and a revocation of President Trump's terrorism designation against the Houthis, with the express purpose of averting a hunger crisis.

However, we remain alarmed by the continuation of Saudi Arabia's unconscionable blockade of Yemen. Particularly in light of a CNN investigation finding that "the U.S.-backed Saudi blockade is leading to deadly fuel & food shortages in Yemen, where hospitals are full of starving children," we urge you to use all available U.S. leverage with the Saudi regime to demand an immediate and unconditional end to its blockade, which threatens 16 million malnourished Yemenis living on the brink of famine.<sup>1</sup>

We are deeply concerned by CNN's reports that the major port of Hodeidah "is now a ghost town," and that "hundreds of food aid trucks sit parked in a line stretching for miles," without fuel, as their cargo spoils. "Saudi warships have not allowed any oil tankers to berth at Hodeidah since the start of the year," CNN reporter Nima Elbagir observed, citing the World Food Programme, which documented that more than a dozen ships carrying 350,000 metric tons of commercial fuel have been prevented from entering Yemen for over two months.<sup>2</sup> On March 12th, the UN Secretary General's office confirmed that "no commercial fuel imports were allowed through Hodeidah Port" last month, "the first time since the escalation of the conflict in 2015 that we have seen the level drop to zero."<sup>3</sup>

According to the UN, 400,000 children under the age of 5 could die from hunger this year without urgent action.<sup>4</sup> The Saudi blockade has long been a leading driver of Yemen's humanitarian catastrophe, triggering recent fuel shortages, inflation and greatly reducing access

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/yemen-cant-wait-more-16-million-people-will-go-hungry-year>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/10/middleeast/yemen-famine-saudi-fuel-intl/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/noon-briefing-highlight?date%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D=12%20March%202021>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/yemen-security-malnutrition-int/at-least-400000-yemeni-children-under-5-could-die-of-starvation-this-year-un-agencies-idUSKBN2AC18V>

to food, water, electricity, and transportation.<sup>5</sup> The blockade also threatens to imminently close down hospitals reliant on power generators to care for famine victims, making emergency travel to hospitals prohibitively expensive, condemning untold numbers of children to die at home.

On March 11th, addressing the UN Security Council, World Food Programme Executive Director David Beasley warned, “most hospitals only have electricity in their intensive care units because fuel reserves are so low.” He pleaded: “It is hell on earth in many places in Yemen right now,” and concluded, “That blockade must be lifted, as a humanitarian act. Otherwise, millions more will spiral into crisis.”<sup>6</sup>

Former CIA analyst and Middle East policy expert Bruce Riedel describes the ongoing blockade as “an offensive military operation that kills civilians.”<sup>7</sup> Given its continued imposition, we are concerned by the administration’s portrayal of Saudi Arabia as “committed and eager to find a solution to the conflict.”<sup>8</sup> While U.S. special envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking has argued that Saudi Arabia is “ready to sit down to negotiate an end to the conflict”<sup>9</sup> with the Houthis, “during which access to ports and other issues could be addressed and resolved,”<sup>10</sup> every day that we wait for these issues to be resolved in negotiations is another day that pushes more children to the brink of death. Tens of thousands more people may die before negotiations over the blockade even begin.

We strongly support a comprehensive political settlement that addresses all aspects of the conflict, including a nationwide ceasefire, currency stabilization, and payment of government salaries. At the same time, a U.S demand to end the blockade must occur independently of negotiations, particularly given that recent Saudi bombings of Sana’a and the Houthis’ offensive on Marib have cast the fate of those talks into doubt. Riedel warns that “linking lifting the blockade to a ceasefire is a recipe for prolonging the suffering of the Yemeni people. The two issues need to be decoupled.”<sup>11</sup>

We ask you to take additional steps to publicly pressure Saudi Arabia to lift this blockade immediately, unilaterally, and comprehensively. This must include guaranteeing that humanitarian and commercial imports can freely enter Yemen; entrusting security oversight to the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM); fully permitting flights in and out of Sana’a airport; and ensuring that crossings for commercial and civilian traffic are permanently opened.

Thank you again for your previous actions to end U.S. complicity in the war in Yemen and resolve the country’s humanitarian crisis. We now ask you to use the full weight of U.S. influence and all tools at your disposal to end the blockade so that food, fuel and medicine, and other essential goods can reach millions of people in desperate need.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/08/world/middleeast/yemen-saudi-blockade.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/news/yemen-heading-toward-biggest-famine-modern-history-wfp-chief-warns-un-security-council>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/03/01/getting-yemens-houthis-to-yes-on-a-ceasefire/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-at-the-2021-high-level-pledging-event-for-the-humanitarian-crisis-in-yemen/>

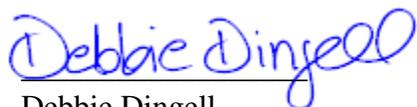
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/10/middleeast/yemen-famine-saudi-fuel-intl/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/03/01/getting-yemens-houthis-to-yes-on-a-ceasefire/>

We respectfully ask that you give our requests your full and fair consideration, consistent with applicable statutes and regulations. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

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Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

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Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

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Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

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Susan Wild  
Member of Congress

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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

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Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

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Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

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Mondaire Jones  
Member of Congress

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Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress

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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

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Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress

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Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

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Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

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Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

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Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress

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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

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Jamaal Bowman  
Member of Congress

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Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

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Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

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André Carson  
Member of Congress

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Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

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Marie Newman  
Member of Congress

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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

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Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

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Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

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Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress

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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

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Brenda L. Lawrence  
Member of Congress

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Karen Bass  
Member of Congress

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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress

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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress

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Cori Bush  
Member of Congress

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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

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Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

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Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

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Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

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Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress

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Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

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Julia Brownley  
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David E. Price  
Member of Congress

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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

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Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress

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David Trone  
Member of Congress

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Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress

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Mark Takano  
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Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

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Adam Schiff  
Member of Congress

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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

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Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

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Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress