

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 14, 2015

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to express our dismay over recent reports that airstrikes conducted by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition struck yet another wedding reception on Wednesday, October 7, in Sanban village, killing at least 23 people. This attack comes just over a week after the even deadlier attack on a wedding party in Wahijah village, on Monday, September 28, which killed at least 131 Yemeni civilians, including at least 80 women.

Sadly, these are only the latest tragedies in the campaign against the Houthi rebels in Yemen. According to Amnesty International, more than 2,100 civilians, including at least 400 children, have been killed in the conflict, with the “vast majority” of civilian deaths and injuries attributed to attacks by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter has acknowledged the United States is providing the Saudi-led coalition with intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and logistics information, as well as resupply of equipment and munitions. With this level of active involvement in the campaign, we are concerned that some overseas may hold the United States responsible for any civilian casualties resulting from the bombing. In order to protect innocent lives and reduce the potential for backlash against U.S. interests, we urge your administration to work with our Saudi partners to limit civilian casualties to the fullest extent possible. When U.S. weapons and intelligence are utilized, the decision to conduct an airstrike should correspond to the standards that would apply to any U.S. military operation for limiting civilian casualties and collateral damage. Additional precautions to protect civilians are particularly crucial as the State Department has reported thousands of U.S. citizens are still inside Yemen in the absence of an official evacuation.

Limiting civilian casualties, however, will only alleviate part of the heartbreaking humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen. After a recent visit to Yemen, the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Peter Maurer, declared: “Yemen after five months looks like Syria after five years.” More than 1.4 million people have been displaced. An estimated 12.9 million are considered food insecure and six million are severely food insecure, while more than 1.2 million children are suffering from moderate acute malnutrition and half a million are severely malnourished, according to the United Nations World Food Programme. Thousands of refugees are fleeing Yemen every week, and experts warn that tens of thousands Yemenis could join the waves of refugees seeking asylum in Europe if the conflict is not resolved soon.

For these reasons, we share the concerns of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, who called for an “end to bombings” in Yemen during his speech to the UN General Assembly on Monday and has consistently stated that there is no military solution to the conflict.

We thank you for your efforts to seek a negotiated solution, and are supportive of your administration's efforts to engage leaders of all countries in the region, including the Iranian government, in dialogue regarding a negotiated end to the civil war. We fully support the [April 2015 UN Resolution 2216](#), which demands all parties in Yemen, in particular the Houthis, immediately and unconditionally end violence and refrain from further unilateral actions that threatened the political transition. The resolution rightly calls for the Houthis to "withdraw from all areas seized during the latest conflict, relinquish arms seized from military and security institutions, cease all actions falling exclusively within the authority of the legitimate Government of Yemen and fully implement previous Council resolutions."

With reports of the Houthi rebel leaders now open to possible UN negotiations, we urge you to continue all diplomatic efforts. The people of Yemen and their relatives in the United States are counting on us to fully explore all avenues that could lead to peace in Yemen.

We thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

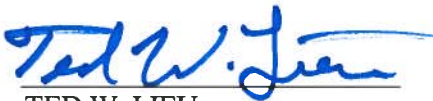
Sincerely,



DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress



KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress



TED W. LIEU
Member of Congress



JOHN CONYERS JR.
Member of Congress



BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress



MAXINE WATERS
Member of Congress



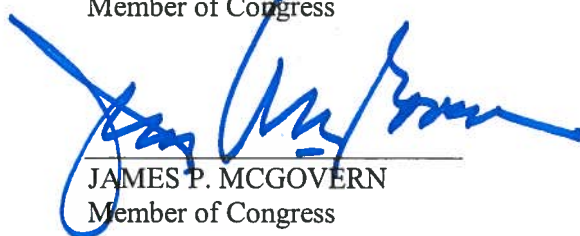
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