

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to express our gratitude for the administration's ongoing attention to the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen, including support for United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg's efforts to secure unprecedented truce agreements between the de-facto authorities (DFA) in the capital, Sana'a, and Yemen's "Presidential Leadership Council" (PLC).¹ In light of the fragility of the truce and the critical importance of mitigating Yemen's deep humanitarian catastrophe, we urge you to maintain pressure on the Saudi-led coalition to eliminate unnecessary restrictions on commercial trade, travel, or other actions that harm the prospects for humanitarian relief and peace in Yemen.

The World Bank and Save the Children have reported that the blockade has significantly contributed to rising food prices and hampered access to clean drinking water, humanitarian aid, and life-saving medical services.² The current negotiated truce has led to measurable progress in alleviating the Saudi-led coalition's widely-criticized blockade on Yemen.³ According to Grundberg, under the first 4.5 months of the truce, the Saudi-led coalition allowed in nearly one million metric tons of fuel and has permitted the use of Sana'a International Airport for commercial flights for the first time since 2016, with the latest UN figures indicating that 41 flights and more than 20,000 Yemenis have been able to fly in and out of the nation's capital.

However, these early steps to mitigate the worst excesses of the Saudi-led coalition's blockade remain woefully inadequate in the face of the world's worst humanitarian crisis, and are in

¹ Gregory D. Johnsen, "Shabwa and Cracks in the Foundation of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council," The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, August 19, 2022, <https://agsi.w.org/shabwa-and-cracks-in-the-foundation-of-yemens-presidential-leadership-council/> ("On April 7, Saudi Arabia engineered what was essentially a bloodless coup in Yemen, pushing President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi out and replacing him with an eight-man Presidential Leadership Council.")

² World Bank, "The critical role of escalating food prices in Yemen's food security crisis," November 2, 2021, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/critical-role-escalating-food-prices-yemens-food-security-crisis>; Save the Children, "Yemen: Fuel crisis pushes sickest children to the brink," March 14, 2022, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/yemen-fuel-crisis-pushes-sickest-children-brink>.

³ World Food Programme, "Yemen is heading toward the biggest famine in modern history, WFP Chief warns UN Security Council," March 11, 2021, <https://www.wfp.org/news/yemen-heading-toward-biggest-famine-modern-history-wfp-chief-warns-un-security-council>; Antony J. Blinken, "The United States Welcomes the Extension of the UN-Brokered Truce in Yemen," August 2, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-welcomes-the-extension-of-the-un-brokered-truce-in-yemen/>.

danger of being reversed if the truce is not extended and expanded. The delivery of nearly one million metric tons of fuel amounted to just 40 percent of Yemen's humanitarian fuel needs during the truce period.⁴ These increased imports come after the Saudi-led coalition only permitted 470,000 metric tons of fuel to be imported during all of 2021⁵ — just 7 percent of Yemen's fuel needs — and even lower levels of fuel imports in the first quarter of 2022.⁶ While the increased fuel imports contributed to an initial decline in food and fuel prices from record highs, food prices again surged to near-record levels in July, with fuel prices doubling year-on-year in the south and increasing significantly in the north, according to the World Food Programme.⁷ The price of basic foods increased by up to 45 percent between March and June 2021, leading the proportion of households lacking access to adequate food to increase to over 50 percent in both DFA and PRC administered areas.⁸ Currently, 17.4 million people are food insecure — a number projected to rise to as many as 19 million by December — with acute malnutrition afflicting 2.7 million children under age five and 1.3 million pregnant and lactating women.⁹ The UN Development Program estimated in 2021 that more than 370,000 people had already died as a result of the war, with 60 percent of deaths resulting from indirect causes such as lack of food, water, and healthcare.¹⁰ As CNN reported on August 9, 2022: "The bombs have stopped but preventable deaths in Yemen won't end until the blockade is fully lifted and the war-fueled economic collapse is reversed."¹¹

Restrictions on humanitarian and commercial imports continue to contribute to the dire situation in the country. Numerous Members of Congress, including members of both parties, have called on the Administration to publicly pressure Saudi Arabia to lift the blockade in Yemen and decouple it from broader political negotiations, citing humanitarian concerns and the need to de-escalate the conflict.¹² Given the outsized human impact of this conflict, it is vital that this position remain a priority for the Administration.

Lifting the blockade on Yemen's ports will advance the efforts by UN Envoy Grundberg to achieve an expanded truce agreement that will secure the regular payment of civil servant salaries and civilian pensions, increased destinations for flights from Sana'a, and agreements to

⁴ Oxfam, "Yemen still starved of food and fuel after month-long suspension of blockade," January 18, 2018, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-still-starved-food-and-fuel-after-month-long-suspension-blockade> ("...estimated monthly fuel needs of 544,000 tonnes.")

⁵ U.N. Office of the Secretary-General for Yemen, "Press release on the implementation of the truce and prospects of its renewal," July 21, 2022, <https://osesgy.unmissions.org/press-release-implementation-truce-and-prospects-its-renewal>.

⁶ World Food Programme, "WFP Yemen Food Security Update, August 2022," August 18, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/wfp-yemen-food-security-update-august-2022>.

⁷ Id.

⁸ Oxfam, "Unprecedented spike in food prices puts Yemenis at risk of extreme hunger," July 28, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/unprecedented-spike-food-prices-puts-yemenis-risk-extreme-hunger>.

⁹ World Food Programme, "Yemen," <https://www.wfp.org/countries/yemen>.

¹⁰ U.N. Development Program, "Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen: Pathways for Recovery," November 23, 2021, <https://www.undp.org/publications/assessing-impact-war-yemen-pathways-recovery>.

¹¹ CNN, "Bombs in Yemen have stopped but children are still denied life-saving treatment," August 9, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/08/05/middleeast/yemen-blockade-mime-intl/index.html>.

¹² Office of Rep. Debbie Dingell, "Dingell, Pocan, Khanna Lead 76 Members of Congress in Calling on Biden-Harris Administration to Press For End of Yemeni Blockade," <https://debbiedingell.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2946>; Office of Sen. Elizabeth Warren, "Warren, Colleagues to Biden Admin: Use All Tools to End Saudi Coalition's Blockade of Yemen," May 20, 2021, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warren-colleagues-to-biden-admin-use-all-tools-to-end-saudi-coalitions-blockade-of-yemen>; Sens. Menendez, Schumer, Reed, Letter to Sec. Blinken, June 25, 2021, ("restrictions on humanitarian and commercial imports, which inflict unacceptable consequences on the Yemeni people and do nothing to improve the prospects of a political resolution to the conflict, should be decoupled from the larger conflict.")

open additional important roads. We urge your administration to continue to support diplomatic engagement to achieve a joint negotiated agreement to open vital roads that will alleviate the humanitarian crisis.¹³ We are also concerned that the truce terms including flights to two different locations have not been fulfilled, and we ask that you either press the government of Egypt to permit flights from Yemen, or to work diplomatically to find additional destinations for Yemenis flying from the capital Sana'a. Progress towards an expanded truce agreement is increasingly urgent, with the PLC reportedly suspending its participation in U.N.-brokered talks after clashes east of Taiz led to the deaths of 10 PLC troops and 23 DFA troops.¹⁴

We are also concerned about reports of attacks by UAE-backed forces against forces affiliated with the PLC in Shabwa, as well as renewed allegations that UAE-backed forces are incorporating al-Qaeda fighters into their ranks.¹⁵ Recent infighting initiated by UAE-backed forces has led experts to express concerns that the DFA may win the war without the negotiated solution that Yemen so desperately needs.¹⁶

Accordingly, we respectfully request that you use US leverage and relationships with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Yemen's PLC to fully lift the blockade — decoupled from the larger conflict — and maintain unity that will best support efforts towards an expanded truce, and ultimately, the end to the Saudi-led war in Yemen through a sustainable, inclusive peace in the country. We urge you to make clear to the Saudi-led coalition that bicameral war powers resolutions have been introduced and that Congress will not hesitate to act in support of the administration policy of ending support for offensive military operations by statutorily prohibiting US participation in any renewed airstrikes or other military action inside of Yemen.

Thank you again for the Administration's attention to this issue and for your consideration of this important request.

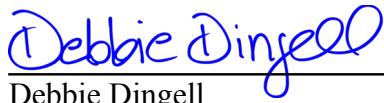
Sincerely,

¹³ Middle East Institute, "One sided and incomplete, Yemen's truce faces implementation hurdles as extension deadline nears," July 29, 2022, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/one-sided-and-incomplete-yemens-truce-faces-implementation-hurdles-extension-deadline> ("Progress on the reopening of roads in Taiz governorate may require negotiations to zoom out to encompass al-Dhale'a Marib, Lajh, al-Bayda, Hodeida, and other Yemeni governorates as well."); Arab News, "Human rights groups call on Houthis to reopen roads in Taiz," August 30, 2022, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2153141/amp>.

¹⁴ Voice of America News, "Rights Groups Urge Yemen's Houthis to End Taiz Blockade," August 29, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/rights-groups-urge-yemen-s-houthis-to-end-taiz-blockade-/6721240.html>.

¹⁵ Associated Press, "AP Investigation: US allies, al-Qaida battle rebels in Yemen," August 7, 2018, <https://apnews.com/article/saudi-arabia-united-states-ap-top-news-middle-east-international-news-f38788a561d74ca78c77cb43612d50da>; Maggie Michael, August 21, 2022, <https://twitter.com/mokhbersahafi/status/1561268485484953600>

¹⁶ Johnsen, "Shabwa and Cracks in the Foundation of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council."



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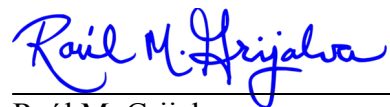
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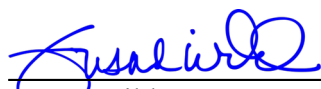
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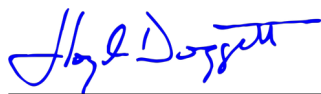
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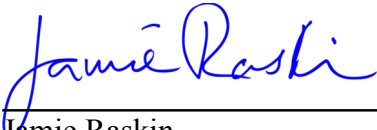
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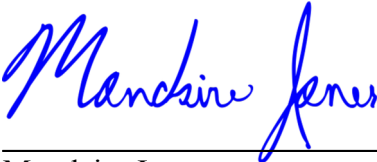
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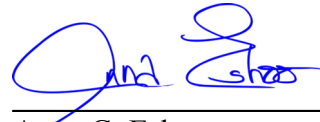
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