

America Must Stop Enabling the Saudi War in Yemen

The Senate can begin ending the crisis by passing legislation to cancel an American arms sale to Saudi Arabia.

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Saudi Arabia’s air and naval blockade of Yemen is an abomination. For years now, ships that would otherwise carry food, fuel, and medicine to the country have been turned away by the Saudi-led coalition, depriving the Yemeni people of the necessities to sustain civilization. Saudi Arabia’s intervention in the Yemeni civil war is a chilling example of the cruelty of warfare by starvation. [According to the United Nations](#), five million people are one step away from succumbing to famine and disease, and ten million more are right behind them.

But, this week, the Senate can start the process of ending this crisis by passing my legislation to cancel an American arms sale to Saudi Arabia that aids and abets the subjugation of the Yemeni people.

The children of Yemen who survive Saudi Arabia’s barbaric blockade will inevitably tell their sons and daughters of the horrors of their youth. And those sons and daughters will tell their sons and daughters. Through oral tradition, a thousand generations of Yemenis will know of the crown prince’s ruthlessness. And they will also know that it was the Americans that sold him the weapons to wage his murderous campaign.

The reports from Yemen describe a nightmare. [The Washington Post](#) reported of a three-year-old boy who could not walk or speak; the *Post* described his face as “skeletal” and arms and legs as “thin as twigs.” He weighed ten pounds, and his father said that he sometimes goes two days without eating because Saudi import restrictions have made food prohibitively expensive, as if mere sustenance was a luxury. [The New York Times](#) told the story of a mother who, after three days of failing to find a ride, carried her 8-month-old son while walking two hours to reach medics to treat acute malnutrition. Even after a week of treatment with enriched formula, the boy still lay motionless on his hospital bed.

Tens of thousands of children have already died from disease, malnutrition, or starvation. International aid agencies, who also have to fight the Saudi blockade to provide humanitarian assistance, put it succinctly: [“the people of Yemen are not starving. They are being starved.”](#)

The Saudi siege of Yemen is made possible because of American weaponry. The arsenal provided by the United States includes [billions of dollars’ worth of military aircraft](#) and [thousands of air-to-ground munitions](#). Only weeks ago, the Biden administration approved a [new \\$650 million sale of 280 advanced medium range air-to-air missiles and 596 missile launchers to the Saudis](#). As painful as it is to admit, the United States is an accessory to Saudi savagery.

President Biden says the latest sale is merely to help defend Saudi territorial integrity, but the commander-in-chief’s words do not match Saudi actions. [According to William Hartung](#), the director of the Arms and Security Program at the Center for International Policy, “the air blockade is enforced by a threat to shoot down any aircraft, military or civilian, that enters Yemeni air space with the goal of landing at Sana’a airport. The provision of air-to-air missiles gives further credibility to this threat, dissuading any government or aid group from bringing in crucial medicines or flying patients in and out of Yemen.” In other words, no weapon is exclusively defensive and continued American arm sales means continued death and starvation in Yemen.

I am leading a bipartisan effort to end America’s complicity in Saudi Arabia’s war on the Yemeni people. This week, I will force a vote on a bipartisan disapproval resolution that proposes to cancel the arms sale. To overcome an almost certain veto, this effort will require the support of two thirds of both chambers of Congress. If members of Congress believe in humanitarianism, if they believe America is a force for good that serves as a model for other nations to emulate, if they believe that the crushing of the Yemeni people must be stopped, then they must vote for the resolution of disapproval.

We have a chance to tell the crown prince that American arms sales will end until he gives up his starvation campaign. We can end the Saudi blockade and bring relief to the long-suffering Yemeni people. Should we fail to seize this opportunity, history will never let us forget that America, the last best hope for humanity, failed to protect defenseless civilians from the cruelty of a criminal regime.

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Rand Paul serves as the junior United States senator from Kentucky.

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