

Bipartisan Thirst for More War: 75% of US Congress Calls on Trump to Boost Intervention in Syria, to ‘Pressure’ Iran and Russia

By [Ben Norton](#)

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While the Donald Trump administration is threatening two new wars on Iran and Venezuela, a substantial majority of the US Congress is clamoring for more immediate action.

[Nearly 400 Congress members](#) from both chambers — roughly 75 percent of all federal US lawmakers — have signed an open letter calling on President Trump to escalate the war in Syria, in the name of countering Iran, Russia, and Lebanese Hezbollah.

Top Democratic Party leaders have joined hawkish Republicans in a bipartisan demand that the far-right president “address threats in Syria” and “demonstrate American leadership in resolving the prolonged conflict.”

They hope to do this through more US intervention, implementing a three-pronged “Syria strategy”: one, “augment our support” for Israel and maintain its “qualitative military edge”; two, “increase pressure on Iran and Russia”; and, three, “increase pressure on Hezbollah.”

While the letter stops short of openly requesting more American troops inside Syria, it clearly states that the US should take more aggressive actions. It also expressly calls on the Trump White House to punish Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah with crippling sanctions.

Among the signatories are 2020 Democratic presidential candidates **Kamala Harris**, **Kirsten Gillibrand**, and **Cory Booker**. ([The full list is here \(PDF file\)](#).)

The letter was notably not signed by **Senator Bernie Sanders** and **Representative Tulsi Gabbard**, both 2020 Democratic presidential candidates who are running left-wing, anti-war campaigns.

The Congressional call does not even feign concern for the humanitarian situation of Syrians, or make any pretense of supporting the “Syrian people.” Rather, it is entirely framed within a chauvinistic perspective of expanding American power, protecting Israel, and weakening “US adversaries.”

“The conflict in [#Syria](#) is complicated, and the potential solutions are not perfect, but our only choice is to advance policies that can stop the growing threats to U.S. interests.” [@RepEliotEngel](#), [@RepMcCaul](#), [@SenatorRisch](#), & [@SenatorMenendez](#) led the bicameral effort. pic.twitter.com/yulvOukhcn

— House Foreign Affairs Committee (@HouseForeign) [May 20, 2019](#)

The letter fearmongers about the presence of Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah in Syria, all of which are fighting in alliance with Syria's internationally recognized government, which sits at the United Nations, and which has requested their support.

The bipartisan document claims that the "region has also been destabilized by Iranian regime's threatening behavior," adding that "Russia's destabilizing role only complements that of Iran," and that "Hezbollah now poses a more potent threat to Israel as well."

The Democratic chair of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Eliot Engel, and the Republican chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, James Risch, helped to lead the letter campaign.

It was also signed by Democratic Party leaders Chuck Schumer and Dianne Feinstein and Hillary Clinton loyalists such as Debbie Wasserman-Schultz and Tim Kaine. Russiagate figurehead [Adam Schiff](#) lent his name, along with neoconservative Republicans like Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton, and Ted Cruz. Republican white nationalist Rep. Steve King's name also appeared on the letter.

Even some Democrats who have been outspoken opponents of the [US-Saudi war on Yemen](#) like Senator Chris Murphy and Representative Ted Lieu were signatories.

The letter goes on to express "deep concern" about "pockets of ungoverned space [that] have allowed terrorist groups, such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and their affiliates, to keep parts of Syria in their stranglehold."

Left unacknowledged in the congressional letter is the way that US intervention in Syria in fact fueled the spread of these extremist groups. The [multi-billion-dollar](#) arm-and-equip program — the largest since the CIA's covert war in Afghanistan in the 1980s — funneled weapons to ISIS and Syria's al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, the biggest affiliate of the Salafi-jihadist group since 9/11.

Former Barack [Obama administration officials even admitted](#) that their proxy war and intervention by US allies Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey greatly [strengthened these radical Islamist groups](#).

The letter reflects the [national security state's perpetual feedback loop](#), where US military intervention fuels extremist groups, and then the strength and persistence of these extremist groups is in turn used to justify further US military intervention to fight them.

The Trump White House's growing threats against Iran

The US Congress is often a site of bipartisan belligerence. In 2018, not a single member of the legislature opposed the Trump administration's imposition of [sanctions on Nicaragua's leftist government](#).

The latest missive reflects a yearning for more war from the leadership of both major political parties, at a moment when the Trump administration is ratcheting up US aggression against numerous countries.

US sanctions on Venezuela led to the preventable [deaths of some 40,000 Venezuelans](#) in 2017 and 2018, and the Trump administration is hardly concealing its ambition to starve the

Venezuelan population as a whole by threatening sanctions on the government's [CLAP food program](#).

The Trump administration is also increasingly threatening Iran. On May 24, Trump announced that he will be [sending 1,500 troops](#) and a dozen fighter jets to the Middle East, in a significant escalation of US aggression against Tehran.

At the same time, the Trump administration declared an “emergency” to bypass Congressional oversight and expedite the sale of billions of dollars of [weapons to Saudi Arabia](#) and the United Arab Emirates.

Representative Tulsi Gabbard, an outsider in the 2020 presidential race, has helped lead the campaign against a potential US war on Iran.

In one of many anti-war tweets, [Gabbard wrote](#): “Cost of Iran war? A region engulfed in bloodletting, countless lives, many trillions \$, our ntnl security undermined, ISIS/AQ strengthened, massive immigration crisis, likely confrontation btwn US & nuclear Russia or China. War without end because ‘victory’ will remain undefined.”

Intel officials & politicians led us into Iraq war. Now Trump’s using the same playbook to lead our country into war with Iran. The cost in lives & treasure will be infinitely greater than the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, & Syria, and will undermine our ntnl security. [#NolranWar pic.twitter.com/BOdnjh33HE](#)

— Tulsi Gabbard (@TulsiGabbard) [May 20, 2019](#)

Senator Bernie Sanders has also joined the movement against a war on Iran. He published a video on May 24 affirming, “I was right about Vietnam. I was right about Iraq. I will do everything in my power to prevent a war with Iran. I apologize to no one.”

I was right about Vietnam.

I was right about Iraq.

I will do everything in my power to prevent a war with Iran.

I apologize to no one. [pic.twitter.com/Lna3oBZMKB](#)

— Bernie Sanders (@SenSanders) [May 24, 2019](#)

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Ben Norton is a journalist and writer. He is a reporter for *The Grayzone*, and the producer of the [Moderate Rebels](#) podcast, which he co-hosts with Max Blumenthal. His website is [BenNorton.com](#), and he tweets at [@BenjaminNorton](#).

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