

U.S. POLICY ON YEMEN

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EAST,
SOUTH ASIA, CENTRAL ASIA,
AND COUNTERTERRORISM

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
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U.S. POLICY ON YEMEN

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EAST, SOUTH ASIA,
CENTRAL ASIA, AND COUNTERTERRORISM,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:06 p.m. in room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Chris Murphy, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Murphy [presiding], Shaheen, Booker, Van Hollen, Young, and Hagerty.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS MURPHY, U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT

Senator MURPHY. I am pleased to bring the subcommittee together today for our first meeting of the year. Our first hearing today is going to be on a critical topic, U.S. policy on Yemen, and I, and the ranking member, will make some opening remarks and then we are eager to begin discussion.

Just 2 weeks after he took office, President Biden said this: “This war has to end.” He called the war in Yemen what it is, a “humanitarian and strategic catastrophe.”

Those words from an American President are long overdue. It is a recognition that the United States has aided and abetted a war for years that has caused untold suffering for millions of Yemenis and has undermined U.S. national security interests.

I first sounded the alarm on this crisis back in 2015. At the time very few people in the United States Senate knew anything about the Yemen civil war, but today that I am hopeful that our participation in this national security cataclysm is coming to an end.

President Biden has announced an end to all American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen, including relevant arm sales. He has reversed the designation of the Houthis as a terrorist organization, which threatened to cut off humanitarian aid to millions.

He has resumed aid that was suspended by the previous Administration to northern Yemen and he has, of course, appointed Tim Lenderking as the Special Envoy. We are honored to have him here today.

He is leading U.S. diplomacy efforts to end this war. Mr. Lenderking is off to a fast start. He will talk to us about that today. But America needs to supplement his diplomatic efforts by properly using its leverage with the parties to the conflict.

It was the right move to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia and to conduct a review of sales to the UAE 2 months ago.

Today, I will be honest, I am concerned by recent reports that the Administration may be moving forward with portions of these sales.

I would urge that any determination of offensive arm sales to these two troubled partners take into consideration some key factors, including the recipients' past record and whether the arms or services in question were previously misused or could potentially be used offensively in the future, especially against civilians or civilian infrastructure.

Frankly, the track records of these two countries in that respect are not good. Recent reporting suggests that the Administration intends to move forward with the sale of Reaper drones to the UAE.

The Emiratis already have a record of illegally transferring weapons to Salafist militias in Yemen, and Congress, frankly, has not received sufficient assurances that such transfers will not happen again.

It is true the UAE has for today suspended its military operations in Yemen. But things change fast in the Middle East, and let us be honest, we cannot know with certainty what nations in the Middle East are going to do with the weapons that we have sold them.

That is why we have never sold F-35s or weaponized drones to anyone except for Israel in the region before. But make no mistake, my call for more pressure on Saudi Arabia or the UAE to bring this war to an end does not ignore the malign Houthi behavior in Yemen.

They are guilty of war crimes in this conflict. They recruit child soldiers. They deliberately hold up aid, do not allow it to get to the citizens that are under areas of their control.

Senator Young and I have called on the Houthis to urgently stop their offensive in Marib and avoid the needless death and destruction that would come from a protracted battle there.

The Houthis need to come to the table, just like the Yemeni Government and the Saudis. But if we can get the warring parties in Yemen to agree to a peace deal with their Saudi and Iranian backers supporting such an agreement, it could provide the grassroots for a new regional security architecture in the Gulf.

The past few years have been nothing but escalation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and it is my view that all of us would be better served by a detente between these two rather than a continuing endless escalating cycle of violence by proxy, and Yemen provide us with a test case for that theory.

Finally, a word on the humanitarian crisis. The situation is still nightmarish, as the Special Envoy knows, for Yemenis.

So we need, one, for donors to step up and provide the funding that is needed to fulfill this year's U.N. appeal, which is right now dangerously underfunded.

Two, we need to resolve the blockade that is restricting fuel deliveries to Hudaydah. While a handful of vessels have been able to berth there, those supplies are only a band aid. They only will last a few more weeks.

Fuel is a lifeline in Yemen. It is critical to power hospitals, ensure the provision of food and access to water, and generally help alleviate the suffering in the Yemeni people.

There is just no excuse to deny these lifesaving fuel imports any longer, and the Saudis, they need to lift this blockade and the Yemeni Government needs to issue the permits to let the goods get through.

With that, let me turn to the ranking member for his opening remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TODD YOUNG,
U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA**

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for our first subcommittee hearing together. I am looking forward to working with you on this subcommittee.

I want to express my gratitude for you holding this first hearing on the topic of Yemen. It is a place that has occupied a great deal of our attention and concern for a long period of time.

I would also like to thank today's witness, Special Envoy Tim Lenderking, for his devotion both in his current position and as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State.

He has worked long and hard to achieve a diplomatic solution to the Yemen conflict. The resource piece eases the terrible suffering of the Yemeni people and sets the country on the path to stability.

You and I have spent time together in the region, and I know you bring a level of expertise to this conflict that is most desperately needed.

Mr. Chairman, last month marked the sixth anniversary of the start of this conflict, and I commend you for, as you indicated way back in 2015, getting deeply involved in this effort.

It was one of the earliest things I became involved in when I came into the United States Senate. It makes me chuckle a bit to reflect that a very high-ranking member of the previous Administration once wrote a column. Did not call me out by name, but indicated that I might be involved in this conflict for political reasons.

I cannot see any upside to that. But I care deeply about the national security and humanitarian amalgam of issues here in the region we are discussing.

U.N. Special Envoy Martin Griffiths, together with regional and international partners, continues to work with Yemeni factions in search of a political settlement.

But in spite of our best diplomatic efforts, the conflict has intensified in recent weeks. Iran-backed Houthi rebels have stepped up their operations against the city of Marib and have also stepped up their drone missile and rocket attacks on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

And just as the fighting in Yemen continues, so does the humanitarian catastrophe. Tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands of Yemenis have died as the direct or indirect consequence of the fighting. Millions of others are displaced. Peace has been elusive thus far and the Yemeni people continue to suffer.

A report issued earlier this month by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that 20.7 million

Yemenis are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection—20.7 million of our fellow human beings.

Eleven point three million of these are children; 2.8 million of them under the age of 5 years. One point eight million are pregnant and lactating women. Three point one million are people with disabilities and over 925,000 are people over the age of 60.

Now, 6 years into this awful war, we are still faced with many, many questions. How do we end the fighting? How do we meet the immediate humanitarian needs of the Yemeni people?

How do we ensure that those suffering are not co-opted by extremist organizations in the region? How do we help set Yemen on a positive long-term sustainable course?

How do we remove the Iranian presence from the country? Well, my hope is that at the end of today's hearing, we will have a clearer sense of how the Biden administration plans to answer these compelling questions.

I am encouraged by the President's early steps to prioritize and end the conflict, but we need to use our resources wisely, learn from past mistakes, and take a clear-eyed look at our diplomatic options.

I hope we hear today what the Biden administration plans to do differently from their predecessors to achieve our political and national security objectives and, perhaps most urgently, to help bring an end to the suffering of millions of innocent Yemenis.

I know that you, Mr. Chairman, our colleagues on this subcommittee, and our witnesses all agree that a prompt and sustainable end to the fighting in Yemen is essential for the security of the region and for the security of American interests.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for your partnership on this issue and for scheduling this hearing today. I look forward to a good discussion and to an exchange of ideas on how the U.S. and our partners can help bring peace to Yemen.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Young, and thank you for your years of commitment on this issue.

Let me now introduce the witness, who, I hope, feels very safe. You are as socially distanced as you could possibly be from members of this committee.

It is my privilege to introduce our Special Envoy for Yemen, Tim Lenderking. Mr. Lenderking previously served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian and Peninsula Affairs in the Near East Bureau at the State Department.

He is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with postings all over the Middle East, having previously worked for NGOs in the refugee field.

Mr. Lenderking, the floor is yours. Of course, we will have a second panel to give us a slightly different perspective. But we will include your full statement for the record, and we ask you now to summarize your remarks so that we have time for questions.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TIMOTHY LENDERKING, UNITED STATES
SPECIAL ENVOY FOR YEMEN, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. LENDERKING. Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to

speak with you about U.S. policy on Yemen, and thank you on a personal note for all the support that you have given to this effort.

The Biden/Harris administration has prioritized bringing about an end to the conflict in Yemen in support of U.N. efforts.

When President Biden announced my appointment on February 4th, he charged me with two specific tasks: reach a durable solution to the conflict and support immediate steps to mitigate the humanitarian crisis.

Since my appointment, I have traveled to the region four times to do exactly that—push the parties toward a ceasefire, followed by inclusive political negotiations, and build international efforts—support for efforts to end the conflict.

As a result, we have now achieved a greater international consensus on resolving this conflict than we had before along with more proactive engagement from key regional actors such as our European partners and the state of Oman.

The U.N. Security Council enjoys an unusual amount of unanimity on solving the conflict in Yemen. This consensus will be critical in pushing for and maintaining a peace process.

The parties are engaging in a constructive manner in a way that they have not for years. As a result of this Administration's focus on Yemen and sustained U.S. pressure, we have seen Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Yemen Government announce their support for a nationwide comprehensive ceasefire.

There is now a greater acceptance that the Houthis will have a significant role in a post-conflict government in Yemen. The U.S. will continue to press the Saudis and the Yemen Government to ensure that they are taking the necessary steps to resolve the conflict in a responsible manner and to mitigate the humanitarian crisis.

More work is needed to get the Houthis to put down their guns, abandon a military solution, and compromise for the sake of peace.

The Houthis have thus far refused to accept the ceasefire, and instead remain focused on continuing their military assault on the city of Marib.

At present, this offensive is the single biggest threat to peace efforts and is also having devastating humanitarian consequences. For nearly 6 years, Marib has been a haven of stability and a refuge for nearly 1 million internally displaced persons who have fled conflict elsewhere and have nowhere else to go.

The Houthi takeover of the city is not imminent, but they continue to move closer to their goal of encircling the city, potentially cutting off a population of 1.8 million people, many of them already extremely vulnerable.

Humanitarian relief organizations warn this offensive risks triggering a tipping point that would overwhelm an already stretched humanitarian response. If we do not stop the fighting in Marib now, it will trigger a wave of even greater fighting and instability.

We are already witnessing this through increased fighting on other front lines, a significant increase in airstrikes, and more Houthi attacks on civilian and other infrastructure in Saudi Arabia than at any point in the conflict.

We must leverage the international consensus, including here in Washington, and the engagement of regional actors like Oman to

stop the offensive in Marib, which is an urgent humanitarian priority.

Let me turn briefly to our efforts to address the humanitarian situation, since you both have raised that so urgently. There is no greater priority when it comes to Yemen. The level of suffering there is unimaginable.

You have all seen the disturbing images and dire reports from inside the country. At least one Yemeni child dies every 10 minutes from preventable causes, and this war has gone on for more than 6 years.

I think about that every day. The roots of this crisis are deep. At the beginning of the war, humanitarian leaders stated that Yemen, after 5 months, looks like Syria after 5 years because the situation in Yemen was already precarious before this war began.

And now the economy is collapsing, leaving families unable to purchase even the most essential goods. Health care and other basic services are almost nonexistent for most Yemenis.

Humanitarian assistance is offering a critical lifeline for millions and helping prevent a famine. But it will never be enough. It cannot restore the economy or repair broken healthcare systems.

In fact, as long as the war continues in places like Marib, the humanitarian crisis will continue to get worse. There are no quick fixes. Only through a durable end to the conflict can we begin to reverse the crisis.

In the meantime, we must do everything we can to mitigate the suffering, and for that reason, I would like to state unequivocally that fuel must be allowed to enter regularly through Hudaydah port.

The Republic of Yemen Government bears responsibility to address this issue, and Saudi Arabia must not stand in the way of it doing so.

Similarly, the Houthis bear responsibility for then ensuring that fuel moves freely throughout the areas under their control, and for abiding by their commitments to the 2018 Stockholm agreement to use port revenues to pay salaries of Yemeni civil servants, salaries that would provide an urgently needed purchasing power to households living on the margins.

I have raised this issue regularly with senior Yemeni and Saudi officials. Although four ships arrived last month and additional ships are moving now as we speak, it is not enough.

I am heartened, however, to see a notable increase in the monthly flow of food into Hudaydah. March 2021 saw 446,000 tons of food enter the port, one of the highest amounts in 5 years, and 45 percent above the year 2020 average.

This, too, is not enough. But these figures do show that the system can work with cooperation from the parties to the conflict and effective U.N. oversight, and I am proud the United States remains one of the largest humanitarian donors to Yemen.

The movement of humanitarian and commercial goods has consistently been a casualty of the Yemen conflict, whether it is movement of goods through ports, roads, and across front lines, diversion of commercial goods, or bureaucratic impediments to humanitarian assistance.

Houthi obstruction of goods and aid has been particularly abhorrent, but they are not the only ones who have engaged in this behavior. These persistent challenges make the imperative a comprehensive nationwide ceasefire all the more important.

Although we can and must tackle these challenges one by one, after 6 years it is clear that only by stopping the fighting can we durably address the obstacles to the free flow of humanitarian and economic activity.

As you can see, the challenges we face are immense. Only through a united international effort based on a clear nuanced understanding of the situation can we hope to make progress toward reaching the goals I have outlined and which you have stressed.

All of you play an important role in that effort, and that is why I am here with you today.

Thank you for your support, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lenderking follows:]

Prepared Statement of Timothy Lenderking

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Young, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about U.S. policy on Yemen. The Biden-Harris administration has prioritized bringing about an end to the conflict in Yemen, in full support of U.N. Special Envoy Martin Griffiths' efforts, and has dedicated extensive resources to easing the humanitarian situation in the country. I look forward to updating you on the progress we have made in these last few months, the challenges that we still face, and the efforts we can undertake together to help bring about an end to this terrible war. As you know, the President and the Secretary believe—and I share their conviction—that Congress plays an essential role in the Administration's efforts and is key to helping end the conflict in Yemen.

Our primary goal in Yemen remains protecting long-term national security objectives for the United States, while improving the situation of Yemeni civilians themselves. This requires a unified, stable Yemen that is free from foreign interference; that controls its own borders and exercises sovereignty over its entire territory—particularly to counter terrorist elements; and that can contribute to safeguarding navigational rights and freedoms in the Bab Al Mandeb strait, essential to global shipping. That means not only curtailing the malign influence of Iran in Yemen, but also supporting a Yemen where no foreign country has undue influence or control. Yemen's relationship with its neighbors should be one of economic and regional cooperation, not one of military intervention. Over the course of this hearing, I hope to provide some insight into how we can achieve that goal—as well as what stands in our way.

CURRENT EFFORTS

Since President Biden announced my appointment on February 4, I have travelled to the region four times to push the parties toward a ceasefire and political negotiations. I have worked to build an international and not just regional consensus toward solving the conflict. On my second trip, I met or spoke with leadership of all the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Republic of Yemen Government. These leaders expressed a genuine commitment to our common goal; they believe, as we do, that the time to end the conflict in Yemen is now.

In subsequent trips, I have made multiple stops in Muscat and Riyadh. The Government of Oman is playing an integral and highly productive role in facilitating negotiations. I can attest to the Sultanate's contribution, to the personal commitment of Oman's leadership and to their unstinting efforts toward facilitating dialogue to resolve this conflict. This level of Omani engagement marks a positive, new development that can help mitigate some of the challenges we have faced in past peace efforts.

For years, the United States has communicated to the Saudi Government that there is no military solution to this war. Since my appointment, I have pressed Saudi officials to pursue peace seriously. As a result of consistent U.S. engagement, we believe the Saudis are ready to end the war in a responsible way. They are in

agreement with us that the time for peace is now. Our Saudi counterparts are working closely with the U.N. Special Envoy and with the Government of Oman to achieve this objective.

What has been most striking to me is the recognition and understanding of the necessary role of Houthi representation in any post-war Yemeni Government. No longer is anyone suggesting Houthi representatives be locked out of any future settlement—a popular refrain when the conflict began. There is an acceptance that the Houthis will have a significant role in a post-conflict government, if they meaningfully participate in a peaceful political process like any other political group or movement. The Houthi leadership has received this message clearly. I again call on the Houthi leadership to take this opportunity to stop the fighting, come to the table, and assume a productive and integral role in a better future for Yemen.

In Washington, discussions about the Yemen conflict focus on the regional actors. We cannot forget, however, that this is at its heart an intra-Yemeni conflict, rooted in longstanding grievances and tensions that have been exacerbated by years of war and the proliferation of armed groups. As such, only Yemenis can truly resolve this conflict—the kind of durable resolution that is needed to reverse Yemen's humanitarian crisis requires a plan for addressing those grievances. Although I find the regional commitment of Gulf countries—including Saudi Arabia—to end this conflict promising, it alone is not enough to bring Yemen the relief it needs. More work is needed to ensure that all Yemeni parties, particularly the Houthis, are ready to put down their guns and compromise for the sake of peace. This will require a unified, international effort.

As the international community knows, U.N. Special Envoy Griffiths has a sound proposal on the table to bring about an end to this war. It supposes a nationwide ceasefire that includes actions to facilitate the movement of humanitarian goods and increase economic activity followed by a transition to inclusive political talks with meaningful participation from women, civil society, and marginalized groups. It is a proposal that all sides seem to support in theory; we are working now to turn it into reality.

We must be realistic about this: we face significant challenges on the road to peace. I maintain, however, that we have momentum toward bringing the conflict to an end, and we are working hard to maintain and build upon this progress.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

I want to start by addressing the humanitarian situation. There is no greater priority when it comes to Yemen. The level of suffering there is unimaginable. At least one Yemeni child dies every 10 minutes from preventable causes. And this war has gone on for more than 6 years. I think about that every day.

The roots of this crisis are deep. At the beginning of the war, humanitarian leaders stated that “Yemen after 5 months looks like Syria after 5 years,” because the situation in Yemen was already so precarious before this war began. And now the economy is collapsing, leaving families unable to purchase even the most essential goods. Healthcare and other basic services are almost non-existent for most Yemenis. Humanitarian assistance is offering a critical lifeline for millions and helping prevent a famine, but it will never be enough. It cannot restore the economy or repair broken healthcare systems. In fact, as long as the war continues, the humanitarian crisis will continue to get worse. There are no quick fixes. Only through a durable end to the conflict can we begin to reverse this crisis.

In the meantime, we must do everything we can to mitigate suffering. And for that reason I would like to state unequivocally that fuel must be allowed to enter regularly through Hudaydah port. The Republic of Yemen Government bears responsibility to address this issue, and Saudi Arabia must not stand in the way of it doing so. Similarly, the Houthis bear responsibility for then ensuring that fuel moves freely throughout the areas under their control. In all instances, the United States opposes restrictions that arbitrarily delay or deny essential commodities from getting to the civilians who need them most.

Fuel imports into Hudaydah and the neighboring Saleef port have been very low for the past 2½ months. Fuel is the lifeblood of all economic activity. Fuel is critical to support the delivery of humanitarian assistance—to power hospitals, ensure the provision of food and access to water, and generally help alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people. While fuel continues to flow through other ports, these ports cannot fully make up for flows through Hudaydah and Saleef ports. We are heartened that commercial imports of food and other commodities continue to move through the port at normal rates, as do goods imported for humanitarian assistance purposes. We know that fuel shortages, however are making the transport of these goods more expensive.

I have raised this issue regularly with senior Yemeni and Saudi officials. Although four ships arrived last month and the Republic of Yemen Government has announced its intention to allow in three more, it is not enough.

The recent fuel shortages are not a new issue. The international community recognized the importance of establishing mechanisms to ensure the continued flow of goods through Hudaydah port in the 2018 Stockholm Agreement. In that agreement, the parties reached a compromise that called for depositing Hudaydah port revenues in a special account in the Central Bank of Yemen branch in Hudaydah and using the funds to pay the salaries of Yemeni civil servants—salaries that would have provided urgently needed purchasing power to households living on the margins. Unfortunately, as the U.N. Panel of Experts has documented, the Houthis have repeatedly violated this agreement and diverted those funds to their war effort, contributing to the current impasse.

I am heartened, however, to see a notable increase in the monthly flow of food into Hudaydah. March 2021 saw 446,025 tons of food enter the port, one of the highest amounts in 5 years and 45 percent above the 2020 average. It is, of course, not enough, but shows that the system can work with cooperation from the parties to the conflict and effective U.N. oversight.

The movement of humanitarian and commercial goods has consistently been a casualty of the Yemen conflict—whether it is movement of goods through ports, roads, and across front lines; diversion of commercial goods; or bureaucratic impediments to humanitarian assistance. All of these are unacceptable. These persistent challenges make the imperative of a comprehensive ceasefire all the much more important. Although we can and must continue to tackle these challenges one by one, after 6 years it is clear that only by stopping the fighting can we durably address the obstacles to the free flow of humanitarian and economic activity.

THE HOUTHI ASSAULT AGAINST MARIB

The single biggest threat to our efforts right now is the Houthis' single-minded focus on a military assault on the city of Marib. In the midst of 6 years of war, Marib has been a haven of stability, and a refuge for nearly 1 million internally displaced persons who have fled conflict elsewhere and have nowhere else to go. While international attention to the battle for this strategic city held by the Republic of Yemen Government has grown, the Houthis have slowly advanced. A Houthi takeover of the city is not imminent, but they continue to move closer to their goal of encircling the city, potentially cutting off a population of 1.8 million, many of them extremely vulnerable. Humanitarian relief organizations warn this offensive risks triggering a tipping point that would overwhelm an already stretched humanitarian response. This offensive also risks provoking further fighting and instability in a way that poses the greatest threat to our current peace efforts.

We must ask ourselves: are the Houthis seriously interested in peace if they continue to advance on a city where they have faced such heavy opposition, especially in the light of the March 22 Saudi announcement proposing an easing of restrictions on Hudaydah Port and Sana'a Airport and a comprehensive, nationwide ceasefire?

HOUTHI ATTACKS THREATEN AMERICAN CITIZENS AND THE ROLE OF IRAN

One of the most important roles the U.S. Government plays anywhere in the world is protecting U.S. citizens abroad. I must stress that every time the Houthis launch a missile or an armed drone into Saudi Arabia—or elsewhere in the Gulf—there is a chance they will injure or kill an American citizen. These attacks have reached a fever pitch. Our Saudi partners have so far prevented a mass casualty event, and it is our hope that this never occurs, but the potential loss of American life is something that literally keeps me up at night. Since the year started, the Houthis have fired more than 150 UAVs into Saudi territory. This tally does not count the ballistic missiles they have launched. During one of my recent trips to Riyadh, the Houthis struck a civilian airliner in the southern Saudi city of Abha just minutes before I entered a meeting with the Saudi Foreign Minister. Thankfully, no one was hurt in the attack.

The Houthis continue to launch explosive boats towards Saudi ports and often fire missiles that hit key Saudi civilian infrastructure. Similarly, media reports note that the Houthi attacks have routinely threatened Aramco oil facilities in Jeddah, Dhahran, and Ras Tanura. These don't just pose a threat to Saudi Arabia, they threaten the more than 70,000 Americans who live and work in Saudi Arabia, close to the sites the Houthis have struck. We have warned the Houthis multiple times about the danger of killing Americans. The Administration has publicly committed to help defend Saudi Arabia from these attacks. In doing so, we protect American lives and ensure the free flow of goods and energy.

That brings me to the role of Iran in this conflict and the need to be candid about the growing Houthi military capability due to support from Tehran. The Houthis receive considerable funding, training, and other support from Iran. Last October, an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps General named entered into Houthi-controlled areas of the country and is being called the Iranian “ambassador” “ambassador” to the Houthis. His continued presence in Sana’a casts doubt upon the Houthi assertion that they are not a proxy of Iran. If the Houthis are not acting as a proxy or partner of Iran, it is time they engage seriously in our efforts to reach agreement on a ceasefire and resume political talks. Each day the war continues, their relationship with Iran deepens. It is critical that we reach a comprehensive peace agreement that not only stops fighting between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia, but that forces the Houthis to participate in a peaceful political process and reduces the instability that Iran and other malign actors will seek to manipulate.

IMPORTANCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN GOVERNMENT

With regard to the Republic of Yemen Government, President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi remains the legitimate leader of Yemen. He was chosen in the last election held before the war, and U.N. Security Council Resolution 2216 recognizes his legitimacy as President. My recent engagements with President Hadi over the last few months have been productive and encouraging. I believe he has assembled a team that can bring about an inclusive and sustainable political solution to the conflict. My communication and partnership with the Yemeni Prime Minister and Foreign Minister is also strong, and we have worked closely to achieve tangible gains for the people of Yemen in the face of great adversity over the last few months. I believe that they are ready to compromise for the sake of the Yemeni people.

Many people have pointed out that the war has led to a proliferation of other power centers, outside of the Republic of Yemen Government. This is true, and it must be considered as part of a peace process. I would also stress, however, that institutions matter. Rule of law matters. Absent that, there is no hope for an orderly transition process. We must continue to work with the legitimate government of Yemen as we seek to reach a political solution.

ECONOMIC SUPPORT TO THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN GOVERNMENT

I want to come back to the economic situation, and particularly the macro-economic situation. Due to rising inflation, continued political instability, and limitations on the Central Bank of Yemen’s ability to conduct effective monetary policy, the country’s economy continues to suffer. The value of the Yemeni rial has fluctuated significantly as a result of this instability, and this has real, serious consequences for Yemeni citizens. Secretary Blinken personally attended the virtual March 1 High Level Pledging Conference for Yemen to highlight the need for greater donor support; he has spoken with numerous counterparts in Europe and the region to emphasize this point. We appreciate the generous contributions of our international partners at the March pledging conference and call on our partners to disburse these pledges in a timely fashion, but no amount of humanitarian aid or pledges will prevent a collapse of the Yemeni economy. That will depend on building sufficient foreign exchange reserves to sustain essential imports, on restoring national economic institutions, and on empowering the private sector to develop Yemen’s resources and meet the needs of the population without interference from parties to the conflict. For this reason, we also ask all concerned parties to join us in finding ways to support the legitimate government economically. The Yemeni Prime Minister and his new unity cabinet have demonstrated a real commitment to strengthening the economy and providing services, consistent with the Riyadh Agreement. This comes even after the entire cabinet was nearly assassinated in December by the Houthis in an attack that killed more than 20 innocent bystanders.

We appreciate the Saudi Government’s March 30 announcement that it would provide \$422 million of subsidized fuel derivatives to the Government of Yemen, and we are working with our Saudi and Yemeni counterparts to ensure this much-needed assistance gets to where it is needed as soon as possible. We hope that the Saudis—and other partners—will continue to find ways to support the Republic of Yemen Government in the face of extreme economic adversity. Improving the Yemeni Government’s ability to manage resources and deliver goods to its people can provide a strong signal of hope for the more prosperous future that awaits Yemen if it achieves peace and rebuilds. But without a unified and functioning Yemeni Government heading into peace talks, these efforts will not succeed.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELATED ISSUES

I am mindful of the human rights situation and how violations of international humanitarian law in this armed conflict and ongoing violations and abuses of human rights can threaten prospects for a durable solution to the conflict. Significant human rights issues are commonplace in Yemen including: unlawful or arbitrary killings; forced disappearances; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; and political prisoners. Unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers, especially by the Houthis and serious restrictions on the exercise of the right to freedom expression, including by the press and through the internet, including violence, threats of violence, or unjustified arrests or prosecutions against journalists, remain of serious concern. We continue to advocate for the release of wrongfully detained person, and we use tools at our disposal to encourage improved respect for human rights in Yemen. The scars these abuses are leaving on Yemen are deep and will continue to affect the population for decades. We believe accountability for these actions is a critical part of Yemen's recovery.

CONCLUSION

As you can see, the challenges we face are immense. Only through a unified international effort based on a clear, nuanced understanding of the situation can we hope to make progress toward reaching the goals I have outlined. All of you play an important role in that effort, and that is why I am here today. Thank you for your support, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much for your testimony and for your service. I have a long list of questions and so I will defer, hoping that my colleagues ask some of them, and then I will ask a few at the end.

So let me go first to Senator Young and then to Senator Shaheen.

Senator YOUNG. Well, Mr. Lenderking, thank you again for being with us today. I, too, have a long list of questions, and I see we have got 5-minute rounds, which is perfect, because that will keep me focused.

So I was struck by a line in your testimony where you describe the role of Houthi representation in any post-war Yemeni Government.

Let me go ahead and quote that line: "There is an acceptance that the Houthis will have a significant role in a post-conflict government if they meaningfully participate in a peaceful political process, like any other political group or movement."

If their role in the government is now established, Mr. Lenderking, why are they continuing to launch assaults on places like Marib?

Mr. LENDERKING. My view, Senator, is that the Houthis may not have made a determination on their own to move into a political process. I think that is partly why we see them raising the bar and imposing maximalist demands when meeting what we feel is a fair and reasonable U.N. plan to move to a ceasefire and move into political talks.

There are, clearly, divisions within the movement. I think there are hardliners and moderates—

Senator YOUNG. Right.

Mr. LENDERKING. —just to use conventional terminology, and there is no question that hardliners have a very strong influence.

I believe that is with the support of the military component of the Houthi movement, and I believe those elements are continuing

to drive on the prospects of a military solution and using Marib is one of the test cases.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you. I know you have visited with Houthi officials in Muscat. Are the Houthis prepared to halt all of their offensive operations? And if the answer is yes, do you have a sense of what conditions under which that would occur?

Mr. LENDERKING. They have not hitherto shown the inclination or the commitment to do so, and I think that is the moment that we are in now.

We are really trying to test and push on those moderate elements, which may be more open to negotiation and ceasefire than the hardliners, and I just think we do not know that yet.

We have not seen from Houthi behavior that there is openness to abandoning the offensive in Marib.

Senator YOUNG. What interests might the Houthi hardliners let us stick with your characterization—have in peace?

Mr. LENDERKING. They may not have any interest in peace, in which case our cause will be very difficult, and that is where, I think, we bring international pressure to bear.

The number of levers that we have to influence Houthi behavior as the United States are, honestly, quite limited. But, nevertheless, I think the Houthis appreciate and, in some ways, have welcomed the U.S. renewed engagement on the Yemen file because they see us as an actor that can influence Saudi Arabia to help make sure that Saudi Arabia fulfills its responsibilities in a responsible manner.

Senator YOUNG. And might the U.N. Security Council be an appropriate venue for that? It is known for complicating U.S. foreign policy objectives. But, nonetheless, you indicate there is an unusual amount of unanimity on Yemen. Could you just speak to that, sir?

Mr. LENDERKING. I do think so. Among the many engagements that I have had over the last couple of months, I have met with the P5, the United States and the other principal members of the Security Council, and in these conversations, I find that there is a strong convergence of approaches toward Yemen and that includes the Chinese and that includes the Russians and I think that is something that is very important to build upon. That gives us a little bit of leverage, I think.

Senator YOUNG. That is encouraging. Are the Houthis an Iranian proxy?

Mr. LENDERKING. There is no doubt that there is a very significant relationship between Iran and the Houthis. The Iranians have aided, abetted, helped, arm, train, and teach Houthis, have given them armaments and upgraded their weaponry in their arsenal to enable them to do the kinds of almost daily attacks on Saudi Arabia.

Senator YOUNG. So it sounds like, over the years they have become a proxy, which would sort of be my assessment of this, my reading of the history. Would you agree with that?

Mr. LENDERKING. I would say that the Houthis argue that they are not. I just want to put that data point out there—

Senator YOUNG. Okay.

Mr. LENDERKING. —and I think that is an important thread for us to pull on in our efforts, going forward.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Young, and thank you to Mr. Lenderking for being here.

I too, like the chair and ranking member, appreciate the focus that President Biden has put on Yemen and your appointment.

I want to just follow up a little bit on Senator Young's questions about the Houthis, because do we assume that if Saudi Arabia were willing to come to the table and negotiate and that the Houthis agreed to stop shelling into Saudi that we could reach an agreement around Yemen that might end the fighting?

Or is there any will at all on the part of either parties to actually end the fighting?

Mr. LENDERKING. I think there is some will that we have seen so far, and by that, if one looks at the recent history, there have been, you know, very constructive engagements in Kuwait in 2016 and Stockholm in 2018.

They faltered. They broke down very shortly after agreements were signed or made or hands were shaken, and we do not want to fall into those same patterns.

We are looking at lessons learned from those two experiences, and I say that there has been constructive engagement between the parties in the last 2—last couple of months in a way that I do not think we have seen in a number of years. That does give me some hope that there will be a commitment for the parties to reach a final deal.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, I certainly share Chairman Murphy's concern about any resumption of arms sales to Saudi Arabia, as long as—well, generally, but particularly around what is happening in Yemen.

And if there are ways that we can share with the Saudis our concern and encourage them to move forward, members of Congress, I hope you will let us know that because I think that is an issue.

I really wanted to talk a little bit about the role of women in Yemen as we are looking at negotiations. As I am sure you are aware, we have a law in the United States called Women Peace and Security that was signed into law in 2017 that requires that our foreign policy prioritize women's representation and gender considerations in all peace and conflict settings.

And my understanding is that this has been a real issue in Yemen, that as we have talked to women representatives from Yemen, they feel totally cut out by the United Nations of peace negotiations, and I appreciate that that is really the next panel.

But since I am not going to be able to get back here to ask this question, I will ask you, are there ways that we can encourage the U.N. to make a priority of including Yemeni women as they are looking at their activities in the country, and what are you doing as our lead negotiator and envoy to address inclusion of women?

Mr. LENDERKING. Well, thank you very much, Senator. Very important question, and I very much agree that the role of women has been downplayed hitherto, and it is important that we not continue that pattern.

On my end, we have a regular dialogue with Yemeni female leaders, both inside and outside Yemen. I have made it a point to keep

in touch. Most of this, unfortunately, is virtual, given the state of COVID around the world and the difficulties of getting into Yemen itself.

But I take a lot of pride in the fact that we have a regular dialogue with Yemeni women leaders, and I think it gives us the ability to better understand the internal circumstances in Yemen and to leverage that to ensure that, going forward, Yemeni women will be represented vigorously at any sort of peace talks.

Senator SHAHEEN. So how can we influence the U.N. to encourage them to take a similar approach?

Mr. LENDERKING. That is part of the conversation that we have with the U.N. team, and Secretary Blinken has also spoken to the Yemeni prime minister about this issue, when as we begin to think—I hope that day will come soon—when we can begin to think about delegations who would begin to undertake peace talks that they be inclusive.

So we are taking a sort of a multi-faceted and well-rounded effort here to try and make sure that this actually happens.

Senator SHAHEEN. I appreciate that. And I am out of time, but just to be clear, as I know you are probably aware as are many others, that this is not just about including women because it looks good.

It is because the data shows that when women are involved in conflict resolution, it means that the resulting agreement is 35 percent more likely to last for 15 years or more.

So there are good data-driven reasons why we need to have women at the table as we are looking at negotiations, and it seems to me that this should be obvious not just to the United States but to the U.N. and to others who are going to be interested in a resolution of this conflict.

So thank you very much for your good work.

Mr. LENDERKING. No, thank you, and just to add on to that, I attended a roundtable yesterday in which that point was made and the importance of not waiting until we get to peace talks to see that women's views are brought into the process.

And so I can assure you that that will be a priority for me, going forward. Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

We have a vote pending on the floor. We are going to keep the hearing going, and Senator Young and I will trade off.

Senator Hagerty was next but I think he went to vote. So we have a few other members who are joining us virtually. Senator Markey would be next.

Senator Markey—so we may have people going to and from votes. If Senator Markey is not there, how about Senator Van Hollen?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, thank you, Mr. Lenderking, for your leadership and your testimony.

I saw reports of some dialogue between Saudi officials and Iranian officials regarding different regional disputes, the conflicts, and Yemen being at the top of that list.

Can you give us any readout about what may have been discussed at that meeting and whether any progress was made?

Mr. LENDERKING. Senator, thank you. I am eager to learn more about that meeting myself, which reportedly took place earlier this month.

We, certainly, regard that contact between the Saudis and the Iranians, whether it is on Yemen or other regional issues, is valuable and important.

The more that these two countries can lower the temperature in the region, the better off any of the regional conflicts in which these two players are set up as opponents will be.

So I am heartened to see the reports that such a meeting took place and I look forward to receiving further details about it.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yeah, I took it as a promising sign, although we never know where it will end up. But you mentioned in your testimony issues of restrictions on fuel imports and the need to open up the port.

How big of a factor and sticking point is that, in your view, to a political resolution of the dispute?

Mr. LENDERKING. I think it is a key part, certainly, of the economic and humanitarian situation in Yemen. What we want to do is avoid politicizing any of the economic issues that are vital to the safety and security of Yemenis.

So while I say that, and I appreciate Secretary Blinken's intervention here to make this happen, the movement of fuel ships and I stated unequivocally that this is a principle that we must continue—it cannot just be seven ships now or eight ships now. It has to be open ended, free flowing with minimal bureaucratic impediment to make sure that the ports are open and receiving goods to the greatest of their ability.

So I think let us get this issue off the table. This should not be a factor in the political discussions going forward. There should be no impediment imposed by any party and no obstruction imposed by any party on the ground or at sea to the movement of vital economic and humanitarian supplies.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. And under what circumstances can you imagine Iran deciding to stop providing material support to the Houthis?

I imagine that would be as part of a political settlement—an overall settlement. But what are the major ingredients, in your view, that need to be resolved to get to that point?

Mr. LENDERKING. I think you are exactly right, Senator, that as we move closer to a political settlement this is the best way to minimize Iran's influence in Yemen, because right now, I do not see any indications that Iran supports a political solution.

What I see is continued aiding and abetting and arming of Houthis by the Iranians so that they can continue attacking Saudi Arabia and, unfortunately, those attacks have risen quite strongly in the last couple of months.

They are also threatening shipping in the Bab-el-Mandeb, this vital, vital strait that continues on up to the Red Sea.

So this is utterly unacceptable to the international community, and I think that the more we push forward in this peace effort, we have to keep an eye on this particular facet.

I would like to see progress, obviously, made by my colleague, Rob Malley, the Special Envoy for Iran in his efforts in Iran. I would hope that that would bear some fruit for the Yemen conflict but I am not holding my breath, and I cannot wait for good will to break out between the United States and Iran.

We have got urgent issues in Yemen. We need to push forward as best we can with the tools that we have.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and best wishes on your important mission.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen. I believe Senator Hagerty has rejoined us.

Senator HAGERTY. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

Special Envoy Lenderking, first, I want to thank you for your willingness to take on this incredibly difficult task of securing a peaceful resolution to the Yemen conflict.

Your reputation as a skilled diplomat in the Gulf and many other regions is impeccable, and I know you have been dealing with the Yemen problem for many years. So it is important for us to hear your expert view.

Earlier this year, the Biden administration revoked the designation of the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organization, ostensibly, to facilitate the very peace process that you are tasked to promote.

But at virtually the same time, they were—in virtually the same time they were taken off the FTO list. The Houthis were attacking Saudi Arabia with missiles and drones and assaulting the city of Marib.

As you describe in detail in your very candid written testimony, this is the circumstance that occurred as we left the FTO status.

So my question is this. Given the Houthis' continued attacks against civilians and against regional neighbors, has the Biden administration's revocation of the Houthis' FTO designation had its intended effect of encouraging the Houthis to make peace? Or have the Houthis simply been emboldened to continue their extremist course?

Mr. LENDERKING. I think, Senator, that if we look at the past year we see a steady rate of Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia.

So I do not think one can attribute attacks in January and February to the undesignation—undesignating of the organization, and I do think that increased pressure on the Houthis is definitely necessary sort of across the board.

But they have kept up a very aggressive tempo of attacks and I think that relates more to the supply of weapons and Iran's equities in Yemen, if you will, than to steps that we have taken.

And of course, the Biden administration did this primarily not because of any love for the Houthis—I mean, I want to be 100 percent clear on that—but because the humanitarian implications of the designation would have been quite dire, and I think looked at through that lens the Biden administration said the humanitarian issue is of paramount importance.

We have to do everything we can to support it and the designation is not—does not fit with that priority.

Senator HAGERTY. I yield my time back, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator Hagerty.

Let me ask a series of questions, and if we have others join, I will ask them to finish off.

First, let me talk about humanitarian aid. In 2019, the U.N. humanitarian appeal was funded at 87 percent, in 2020, it was funded at 50 percent, and so far this year, that figure is 21 percent.

There is a proposal on the table from the Swiss and the Swedes, who are hosting this year's conference, to do a follow-on conference to try to get that number up.

What do you propose are the necessary next steps to try to increase these commitments? Obviously, the need is greater today than it was in 2019 and our funding levels internationally have decreased.

Mr. LENDERKING. Absolutely right, Senator, to point that out, and, again, the—one of the two charges that the President asked me to undertake was to work to mitigate the humanitarian crisis in order to do that.

We have talked here about the importance of opening up ports and other vital arteries, but the other piece is that there has to be funding, generous funding, from the donors.

I have made it a priority on my trips around the region, and I have stopped in all of the Gulf countries or spoken to their leaders. I have visited one or two European countries.

Central to all of those conversations I have is the importance of maintaining generous funding. I was very glad that Secretary Blinken appeared at the March 1st donor's conference to lend American support and highlight the importance of the humanitarian situation.

But we have got to have the follow through. It is not only to get more funding but it is to ensure that the funds that have been pledged will be dispersed.

So that is right up there at the top of my list of priorities, and I would like to see the Swiss and the Swedes go ahead with this conference.

Senator MURPHY. I am glad to hear it. I wanted to talk about the conditions necessary for a restart of ceasefire discussions. You stated in your opening remarks that the Saudis are ready to end this war responsibly and they want peace.

But I would note just after they made their ceasefire offer, they escalated airstrikes in Yemen, striking Sana'a as well as a nearby grain port, and they launched new military offensives of their own.

No doubt the Houthis need to stop the offensive in Marib and we cannot have any serious discussions about a political settlement without that offensive.

But are there also steps that the Saudis need to take beyond their end for support to the blockade in order to set the conditions for either a ceasefire or political discussions following on that ceasefire?

Mr. LENDERKING. Absolutely. I do think, Senator, that there is a receptivity from Saudi Arabia to working with us to achieve a responsible resolution of the conflict.

But there is going to have to be a real spirit of compromise from Saudi Arabia. Some of the goals that they may have wished to achieve 5 years ago are not attainable.

The Houthis have shown themselves to be a very strong military force, and there has been great loss of life, way too many civilian casualties, much too much destruction of civilian infrastructure, loss of life, internally displaced people.

So what I would like to see from Saudi Arabia, and I think where we can come into play most directly, is to show that spirit of compromise and to meet terms that are attainable, that are realistic on a ceasefire, and to help work out mechanisms and adhere to them that would govern the terms of a ceasefire, and to help—continue doing what we are doing now to keep those vital economic and humanitarian arteries open.

Senator MURPHY. I am going to try to sneak two more questions in under the gun. One is on the current role of the UAE inside Yemen. We talk about the UAE's decision to withdraw militarily from the UAE.

But my sense is it is not that simple. There are reports that the UAE is still involved in other mechanisms to support their partners on the ground inside Yemen.

While they may not have their own forces participating, they still have lots of other ways to be able to try to leverage events in their direction.

What is your sense of the UAE's involvement in the Yemen civil war today?

Mr. LENDERKING. I went to UAE last week to discuss that very issue, Senator, and foremost on my mind humanitarian concerns, as you noted, following through on pledges and continuing to be generous on the humanitarian side, but also to ensure that the UAE uses its influence in Yemen.

And as you do rightly point out, they do have influence in Yemen, even if there are not Emiratis themselves present in the same numbers, to use that influence to ensure that groups that they have influence over are continuing to support the Yemeni Government and stay within the terms of a united Yemen.

Senator MURPHY. Are they still involved in providing any kind of military intelligence, logistical, or other support to armed actors on the ground in Yemen?

Mr. LENDERKING. Well, they are still a member, of course, of the Saudi-led coalition. So they are a strong member of that entity and they are also providing key counterterrorism support for us and for the Saudis to go after al-Qaeda and ISIL remnants, which still exist and thrive in the open spaces in Yemen.

Senator MURPHY. I will sneak in one last question and then ask Senator Young if he has got any final questions for you before turning to the next panel.

You talked about the role of the Iranians and our lack of leverage on the Houthis. I understand you probably do not want to comment specifically on negotiations surrounding the reentering of a nuclear agreement.

But suffice it to say it is helpful for us to create conditions such that Iran has less reason to create provocations in the region that compromise our security interests.

I think you are right to suggest it is not easy to predict what the Iranians are going to do, whether we are inside or outside of the JCPOA.

But there is lots of people that have suggested that so long as we are involved in a maximum pressure campaign on Iran, they are going to be looking for ways to try to disrupt our interests in the region, and Yemen is, clearly, a place where they can do that.

I know you cannot predict Iranian behavior. But we are wise to try to arrange our priorities in the region to try to disincentivize the reasons why Iran might want to provoke us and create destabilizing situations.

Mr. LENDERKING. I, certainly, agree with that and, again, that is why I hope that the conversations in Vienna and the further interactions through the Europeans and others that we really can make some headway with Iran on the JCPOA.

In the meantime, I do think we have to stay vigilant. We have to keep our naval forces through NAVCENT in Bahrain vigilant with what the Iranians are doing on the high seas, make sure they are not able to continue smuggling supplies into the Houthis.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you. Any final questions, Senator Young?

Senator YOUNG. Just a final sort of comment and I would like to enter something into the record. There have been press reports recently that the Houthis are indoctrinating children in Yemen with violent anti-Semitic and extremist material.

According to this reporting, the curriculum is part of a broader Houthi strategy to instill their ideology across society. I think we have been hearing for years about such indoctrination occurring in madrasas, oftentimes, Sunni curriculum funded by some complicated partners, and oftentimes.

But with that said, this would be Houthis who are—their creed is a form of Shi'a Islam. So anyway, Mr. Chairman, without objection, I would like to request that this article be added to the record.

Senator MURPHY. Without objection.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this hearing.]

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much for your testimony.

Mr. LENDERKING. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

And with that, we will bring our second panel up. I am going to introduce you and then cut out to vote.

And as they are being brought up, I am going to read their introduction so I do not miss the vote.

Our second panel is, first, going to be Lise Grande, who is the President and CEO of the U.S. Institute for Peace. She has 25 years of overseas experience leading, managing, and coordinating complex operations for the United Nations.

Most of us know her through her prior role. Before joining USIP, she served as the head of U.N. Humanitarian and Development Operations in Yemen. She has been of great counsel to many of us as we have formed our views on the Yemen conflict.

And we also are very pleased to be joined today by Amanda Catanzano. She is the senior director of International Programs, Policy, and Advocacy at the International Rescue Committee.

She comes to the IRC from a career in the United States Government, most recently as director for strategic planning at the National Security Council.

These are two witnesses who can give us an important perspective on the current state of the crisis in Yemen.

So, Lise, we will turn it over, first, to you.

STATEMENT OF LISE GRANDE, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. GRANDE. Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, it is an honor to have the opportunity to appear before you today.

From March 2018 until December 2020, I served as the head of the U.N.'s humanitarian and development operations in Yemen.

For nearly 3 years, I was the only senior international official present full time in the country and the only one to be present in Sana'a, the capital under the control of Ansar Allah, the Houthis.

As we all know, the conflict in Yemen has lasted 6 years. It has resulted in the world's worst humanitarian crisis. It has resulted in a fragmentation of political power and turned Yemen into a failed state likely to collapse or, worse, to split into independent separately administered zones.

With your permission, I would like to share more detail on the humanitarian crisis, which is so shocking in its magnitude it is hard even to describe.

Senator Murphy, as you noted, and as did Senator Young, 20 million Yemenis, two-thirds of the entire population, now require humanitarian aid. There is no other country in the world where a higher percentage of the population depends upon the generosity of the international community to survive.

Twelve million are suffering from the most severe, agonizing, and life-threatening forms of need. They are either hungry, ill, forced to use unsafe water, homeless, jobless, unable to send their children to school, or all of these.

Sixteen million Yemenis—that is more than half the entire country—do not have enough food. They wake up every morning and have no idea if or when they will eat that day.

If something is not done now, humanitarian agencies are estimating that as many as 400,000 children are at risk of starving in just the next few months.

As I said in my introductory comments, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has a very specific cause. It is the war. Yemen's war is actually waged along two fronts.

The military front includes the airstrikes, bombing, missiles, shelling, landmines, and fighting that have killed or injured nearly 20,000 civilians. The second front includes the measures that are directed at destroying the enemy's economy.

These measures are used deliberately and to great effect by the Saudi-led coalition and include controls over the number and timing of all ships entering the port city of Hudaydah.

They also include the decision to stop salary payments for public servants in northern Yemen, and they include restrictions on credit, imports, capital flows, and customs. At least 130,000 civilians

are conservatively estimated to have died as a result of these and other indirect factors.

The second front is a main driver of the humanitarian crisis, but it is not the only cause. Another aggregating factor is the behavior of Ansar Allah of the Houthis.

In northern Yemen, Ansar Allah has now systematically seized almost all of the instruments of the state. They have also established new parallel structures staffed only by Houthis, which operate without public accountability and constitute a separate system of authority with wide-ranging powers.

Ansar Allah has imposed hundreds of restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid, and Ansar Allah continues to threaten, bully, intimidate, and detain humanitarian staff.

The steps that are being taken by President Biden in Yemen are welcome. All of us who have worked in the country know that only the U.S., with our partners, with our allies, has the leverage to end the war. There are many reasons why the U.S. should use this leverage.

First, and this is absolutely undeniable, the war has given American adversaries opportunities to undermine our interests.

Second, two of the world's most malign extremist forces, AQAP and ISIL, are present in Yemen and likely to spread further if the war continues.

Third, as the most generous donor in the world and committed to value space diplomacy, none of us would want to see the U.S. turn its back on Yemen in its time of greatest need. Of the many things that need to be done right now, none is more urgent than relieving humanitarian suffering.

Four steps will make all the difference.

First, as several of us have said, we need to give generously to humanitarian agencies so they can do their work.

Second, economic restrictions, part of that second front, need to be immediately lifted, allowing basic goods to enter and circulate freely in the country.

Third, the Central Bank in Aden needs to be capitalized and public servants in the north need to be paid. None of these steps are impossible. In 2018, as the country was facing famine, all of these steps were taken and, as a result, famine was avoided.

The fourth step is harder. Ansar Allah's police state is now so predatory and coercive, the U.S. and our allies have no choice but to condition our engagement with the movement in ways which incentivize, pressure, the Houthis to change their behavior.

A final point. Yemen's political future can only be decided by Yemenis. The U.S. can help to create the conditions for a national reckoning and dialogue.

But the work of deciding what kind of country Yemen will be is theirs, not ours. All political and civil society components, including the women's groups mentioned by Senator Shaheen, needs to be part of this discussion.

If that does not happen, Yemen's future will be allowed to rest only in the hands of the elites who have destroyed the country and created so much misery. Surely, we can avoid this.

Before the national reckoning, however, can even start, the parties and forces fighting this war must lay down their weapons. So

far, the belligerents have not yet made this commitment. Instead, they continue to maneuver, stall, dodge, and fight.

There are now 47 separate front lines in Yemen. A year ago, there were 33. This may be evidence of the parties trying to gain final advantage before sitting down to talk, or it may signal that the forces fighting Yemen's war are not yet persuaded they should stop.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Grande follows:]

Prepared Statement of Lise Grande

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee: It is an honor to have the opportunity to appear before you today—and especially to do so with Special Envoy Tim Lenderking and Amanda Catanzano, colleagues with whom I have been privileged to work, and for whom I have the deepest respect.

Starting in March 2018 and through December 2020, I served as the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen. During that time, I was stationed in Sana'a, the capital city, which remains under the control of the Ansar Allah movement, known more widely as the "Houthis." For nearly 3 years, I was the only senior international official present in northern Yemen. With the permission of the Committee, I am pleased to offer brief reflections on Yemen's crisis and possible options for making the situation better.

HOW BAD IS THE YEMEN CRISIS

The conflict in Yemen has lasted 6 years, resulted in the world's worst humanitarian crisis, wrecked public institutions, created new forms of corruption, fragmented political power and turned Yemen into a failed state likely to collapse, or worse, split into independent, separately administered zones.

The humanitarian crisis, in particular, is so shocking in its magnitude, it is hard even to describe.

More than 20 million Yemenis are dependent on humanitarian assistance and protection to survive. Twelve million Yemenis are suffering from the most severe, acute, agonizing and life-threatening forms of need. They are either hungry, ill, homeless, thirsty, unable to send their children to school or without visible means of livelihood, or all of these.

Sixteen million people, more than half the country, are hungry. They wake up every morning and have no idea when, or if they will eat that day. Two million Yemeni children and one million pregnant and lactating women are already ravaged by lack of nutrition or food, or both. If something is not done now, as many as 400,000 children could starve this year.

During the 25 years I served with the United Nations I worked in 11 acute major conflicts and emergencies. One of the hardest things you see are malnourished, starving children. The very moving documentary "Hunger Ward" by Skye Fitzgerald follows two young girls as they suffer from and are treated for malnutrition. It is a heart-wrenching story. The film is up for an Oscar this year, and many of us hope it wins.

Since 2015, when the war started, Yemen has experienced wave after wave of humanitarian catastrophe. In 2017, the worst cholera outbreak in modern history hit the country. The next year, in 2018, Yemen faced the one of largest famines the world had seen in decades.

That famine was pushed back because humanitarian organizations, led by the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, the U.N. Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization and more than 150 front-line partners, supported generously by donors, launched one of the largest, fastest scale-ups of assistance in generations.

This year, because agencies and partners have not received the money they asked for, because access to the people hurting the most is difficult, and because of the destitution created by the war, famine is again stalking the country.

And it is not just famine. Yemen is one of the 11 countries at highest risk of epidemics of infectious diseases. COVID has hit the country very hard. Millions of people are at even greater risk of illness and death because life-saving medicines and equipment are in short supply, half of all hospitals and clinics are not functioning, authorities have failed to mandate protective measures and because immunity levels are disastrously low after years of neglect, trauma and hardship.

WHAT IS DRIVING THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen has a very specific cause—the war.

Yemen's war is being waged along two fronts. Militarily, belligerents are doing everything they can to degrade and disable the capabilities of their enemies. This includes airstrikes, bombing, missile and mortar strikes, artillery shelling, landmines and fighting. The impact of this warfare on civilians is enormous. Four million Yemenis have been displaced from their homes and nearly 20,000, probably more, have been killed. Hospitals, schools, water and electricity grids, food stores and irrigation canals have been hit and destroyed.

The “second front” includes the coercive measures directed at destroying the enemy's economy. This strategy is used deliberately and to great effect by the Saudi-led Coalition. Measures include controls over the number and timing of all ships entering the port city of Hodeida, the entrepot for close to 90 percent of all basic goods entering northern Yemen.

Other measures, devastating in their impact on civilians, include the decision to stop payment of salaries for public servants in areas under the control of Ansar Allah, restrictions on lines of credit, quotas on the importation of basic goods including fuel and cooking gas, controls on capital flows through the Central Bank and on foreign exchange, liquidity shortages, import restrictions on industrial materials and differing customs regimes.

The measures which together constitute the “second front” are now the main drivers of the humanitarian crisis. They have led to the immiseration of the population in areas under the control of Ansar Allah, ruined many economic and financial enterprises and starved public and national institutions of necessary resources. Although impossible to know for sure, at least 130,000 civilians are conservatively estimated to have died as a result of these.

The “second front” may now be a main driver of the humanitarian crisis, but it is not the only cause.

In northern Yemen, Ansar Allah has systematically taken over and transformed governance in the areas they administer. Oversight and control of state institutions are now fully in the hands of the movement. Parallel institutions, staffed exclusively by Houthis, have been established for key functions including policing and internal security.

Virtually all public revenues are now channeled directly into institutions under the control of the movement, including the branch of the Central Bank in Sana'a. The movement has also introduced mechanisms to set and execute district and governorate budgets. Ansar Allah has usurped Zakat, a main pillar of social protection, making it a compulsory tax, and imposed draconian tariffs on agriculture and trade.

The new structures and mechanisms created by Ansar Allah are not an improvement on the old system; they are predatory, operate without public accountability and constitute a separate system of authority with wide-ranging powers.

Houthis are using these instruments to divert revenue from public goods and services to their fighters, sabotage private sector companies that do not cooperate with them, and manipulate currency and liquidity for their interests, not those of the general public.

At the same time, Ansar Allah has introduced literally hundreds of restrictions on humanitarian aid, seeking to control the type, flow and targeting of all forms of assistance. Ansar Allah also continues to threaten, bully, intimidate and detain humanitarian staff.

Restrictions on aid are also sometimes imposed by the Government of Yemen, local authorities and other political groups. All restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance are violations of humanitarian principles and therefore unacceptable. The severity, intent and impact of those imposed by Ansar Allah, however, are of a different magnitude. Ansar Allah's arbitrary exercise of power and its reliance on repressive administrative mechanisms and regulations have combined to create one of the most non-permissive operating environments in the world for humanitarians.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

The steps being taken by President Biden and the U.S. Administration to find ways of resolving Yemen's war and addressing humanitarian crisis are very welcome. Many of us who have worked in Yemen know that only the U.S. has the leverage to end the war. There are many reasons why the U.S. should use this.

The war has given countries hostile to the U.S. and our allies opportunities to undermine our interests and expand their influence in the region. Two of the world's

most malign extremist forces—AQAP and ISIL—are present in Yemen, and likely to spread further if the war continues.

Yemen sits astride one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints; close to 10 percent of total seaborne-traded oil and refined products transit through the Bab el-Mandeb, a narrow straight linking the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean through the Red Sea and Suez Canal. Disruption to the straight would likely have an immediate, negative impact on global energy supplies.

There are also compelling moral reasons for being in Yemen and doing more. The U.S. is the most generous donor in the world and as concrete proof of its commitment to values-based diplomacy, none of us would want to see the U.S. turn its back on Yemen in its time of greatest need.

Of the many things that need to be done in Yemen, none is more urgent than relieving humanitarian suffering.

Four steps will make all the difference.

First, we need to give generously to humanitarian agencies, and encourage other countries to as well, to ensure these partners have the nearly USD \$4 billion they require this year.

Second, the many restrictive measures imposed on the economy need to be immediately lifted, allowing the basic goods that people need to survive to enter and circulate freely in the country.

Third, a consortium of international donors and financial institutions needs to reach agreement with authorities in both Aden and Sana'a to capitalize the Central Bank in Aden, which will improve liquidity in the south, and pay salaries for public servants in the north, which will dramatically increase the purchasing power of hard-hit families.

None of these steps are impossible; we took all of them in 2018. And because we did, we avoided famine.

The fourth step is harder. In 2018, Ansar Allah had not yet constructed its police state. The instruments and structures of this state are now so predatory and coercive, the U.S. and our allies need to leverage our influence and condition our engagement with Ansar Allah in ways which incentivize it to change its behavior.

There are many very talented people and diplomats who are advocating and working to end Yemen's war and secure a new political peaceful future. Their efforts are determined, and heroic.

Yemen's political future, however, can only be decided by Yemenis. The U.S. and our allies can help create the conditions for a national reckoning, but the work of deciding what kind of country Yemen will be is theirs, not ours.

One of our most important roles is to insist that the broadest possible configuration of the Yemeni society is included in the national reckoning.

Decisions about the future of Yemen cannot just be in the hands of the elites who have brought destruction and misery to the country and who are likely to strike deals that reflect their own narrow interests. All the many forces that control territory in the country and aspire to represent the will of the people need to be included. So does the private sector, which will have to rebuild the economy, women's and youth groups who will be key to the country's recovery, civil servants who will have to revitalize public systems and the intelligentsia, tribal leaders, community leaders and religious leaders who will play leading roles.

This reckoning will not be—cannot be—the same as the 2013–2014 national dialogue. Too much has changed.

Political power has shifted dramatically. Ansar Allah now fully controls the instruments of the state in northern Yemen and has constructed its own parallel state-within-a-state. In the south, new constellations and political forces challenging the integrity of Yemen's unification have emerged. Tribal leaders have played decisive roles during the conflict, widening their influence and asserting their role in adjudication of social and property issues. War profiteers, many linked to the warring parties, have established powerful patronage networks to protect their gains.

Civil society is overwhelmed and public institutions are on life-support. The companies and trading houses which have managed to survive in the private sector are struggling to keep their doors open. Civil society groups have stepped into the void created by collapsing state institutions, providing social protection, insisting on accountability and caring for families and communities facing famine and disease. Public institutions have been hollowed out and many are no longer able to provide basic services.

Before the national reckoning can even start, however—and before any of the political, economic, social and security questions that need to be answered can be answered, the parties and forces fighting this war must lay down their weapons.

So far, the belligerents have not yet made this commitment. Instead, they continue to maneuver, stall, dodge and fight. There are now 47 separate frontlines in

Yemen. A year ago, there were 33. This may be evidence of the parties trying to gain final advantage before sitting down to talk or it may signal that the forces fighting Yemen's war are not yet persuaded they should stop.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Ms. Grande, for that very compelling testimony.

Next, I would like to call on Ms. Catanzano.

**STATEMENT OF AMANDA CATANZANO, SENIOR DIRECTOR,
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS, POLICY AND ADVOCACY,
INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. CATANZANO. Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, members of the subcommittee, thank you for convening us today and for prioritizing Yemen for this subcommittee's first hearing.

I represent the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian organization with over 400 staff, mainly Yemenis, working across the north and south of the country.

Last year, the IRC provided health services for over 600,000 Yemenis and treated nearly 30,000 children under five for malnutrition, thanks in large part to the generous U.S. funding we receive.

We also provide education, clean water, emergency cash, and job training. While the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is protracted, it is by no means static. The situation continues to unravel as Yemenis confront new shocks with fewer resources and less resilience.

After a relative lull, conflict is spiking. Yemenis are enduring the legacy of a cruelly-conducted war that has made recovery nearly impossible. Every day for over 6 years Yemenis have endured 10 airstrikes on average.

And at the same time, the conflict's daily horrors continue. Last year, as Ms. Grande mentioned, frontlines exploded from 33 to 49, making safety increasingly hard to find.

Today, Yemenis are more likely to be killed in their homes than anywhere else. And Yemen's economy is collapsing as warring parties manipulate it as a tool of warfare, choking the import of critical commodities, especially fuel, and sending prices skyrocketing.

Three in five Yemenis surveyed by the IRC could not afford basic items like food, and many families are resorting to child labor and child marriage to ease their household expenses.

The humanitarian response is constrained. Bureaucratic challenges, not insecurity due to conflict, account for over 90 percent of access incidents. And despite some improvements, issues like delays in program approvals still slow the delivery of lifesaving aid.

But the biggest constraint to our work is underfunding, which has forced humanitarians to scale back even as the needs spiral. The result? The world's worst humanitarian crisis is on track for its worst year yet.

Famine alarms are ringing again as over half of Yemen's population is going hungry, and a record 50 percent of all children under five are acutely malnourished and 400,000 at risk of dying without treatment.

To call this unraveling a tragedy would miss the point. Yemen's cycle of crisis is not an accident. It is the predictable outcome of a war that has put civilians in the crosshairs.

A hunger crisis is inevitable when a thousand markets, farms, and food storage facilities are bombed and import restrictions price families out of basic goods. Malnutrition and disease outbreaks are what happens when health facilities are attacked or denied critical supplies, and child labor and child marriage are among the only options left when the international community cuts funding in half and 5 million fewer Yemenis receive aid each month.

We are grateful for the sustained congressional pressure that has helped to drive U.S. policy away from a failed war strategy, and we applaud the Biden administration's initial steps to pivot toward diplomacy.

The severity of the humanitarian situation requires the U.S. build on this momentum quickly and we urge the U.S. to do both the urgent work to save lives and the important work to end the conflict driving the need without making one contingent on the other.

Humanitarian steps are not political bargaining chips. Sequencing or conditioning them shows callous disregard for Yemeni lives. To this end, the U.S. should take the following five steps.

First, rally more funding to avert the worst outcomes like famine. Humanitarians are operating with only a quarter of the funds required. The U.S. should support a follow-on donor conference this year to fill the dangerously low coffers.

Second, push back against constraints on humanitarian operations across Yemen. NGOs like the IRC need high-level engagement between the U.N. and donors with all authorities to remove persistent bureaucratic barriers that keep aid from Yemenis who so desperately need it.

Third, ensure the unimpeded flow of commercial and humanitarian imports. Given the devastating humanitarian toll of the current fuel shortages, the U.S. should prioritize pushing the Government of Yemen to allow fuel ships to berth at Hudaydah port. The U.S. should also push for all air and seaports to be reopened to humanitarian and commercial traffic.

Fourth, secure an immediate nationwide ceasefire. A halt to the fighting would protect civilians and the infrastructure they depend on, and it would facilitate delivery of much-needed aid and help create space for a meaningful political process.

Fifth, drive forward a new diplomatic framework. A sustained political settlement is the only way out of Yemen's nightmare.

Building on last week's Security Council press statement, the U.S. should support a new council resolution that is more inclusive and addresses the thorniest issues, including the economic disputes increasingly at the heart of the conflict and the humanitarian crisis.

I offer my sincere thanks to the subcommittee for this opportunity to share the challenges facing IRC's Yemeni staff and clients.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Catanzano follows:]

Prepared Statement of Amanda Catanzano

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Young, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for convening this hearing on Yemen's humanitarian crisis. Your focus on Yemen as the first hearing of this subcommittee is not just admirable, it's crit-

ical. The crisis—already regarded as the world’s worst—threatens to spiral out of control. Yemenis are facing unprecedented challenges in 2021. Conflict is raging; the economy is imploding; starvation is looming. Against this grim backdrop, the humanitarian response is at risk of collapse as warring parties impede the flow of aid and donors turn away from the record needs.

I speak on behalf of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a humanitarian organization with over 400 staff, mainly Yemenis, on the ground in the country. We provide lifesaving aid and services to Yemenis across eight governorates—in areas under the de facto control of Ansar Allah in the North and of the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) in the South. Generous U.S. Government funding has helped support our work in Yemen since 2012.

The IRC is one of the largest non-governmental health actors in Yemen, where only half of health facilities are functional and even fewer provide maternal or child healthcare services. Last year, the IRC supported 84 health clinics—providing health services for over 600,000 Yemenis. We helped over 14,000 women deliver their babies safely, treated nearly 30,000 children under 5 for malnutrition, and helped thousands of pregnant and lactating mothers learn healthy feeding practices to prevent malnutrition. We also support mobile health teams to reach Yemenis in remote areas and displacement camps. Beyond health care, we provide education, clean water, emergency cash, job training, and support for women and children who have been the victims of violence.

We hope today’s discussion will focus not just on Yemen’s cycle of crisis, but on the concrete humanitarian, economic and political actions necessary to break it. After 6 years, Yemenis are desperate to have the U.S. and the international community on their side, rather than as actors in a conflict that could take a half a million Yemeni lives or more.

2021 COULD BE YEMEN’S WORST YEAR YET

When the IRC began working in Yemen in 2012, the country already faced steep humanitarian and development challenges. It was the poorest Arab country, with half of its population living in poverty. It ranked 153rd on the Human Development Index and 147th in life expectancy.¹ But the levels of misery have grown exponentially since the conflict escalated in 2015. Since 2017, the U.N. has consistently labeled Yemen the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. The bottom continues to drop out because the relentlessness of this conflict and the cruelty with which it is conducted have eroded Yemenis’ resilience and coping strategies. As such, Yemenis are worse off in 2021 by almost all measures than at any point in the conflict.

Today, Yemen has the world’s largest population in need of aid at over 20 million. But the conflict has not produced a major refugee crisis. The closures of air and sea ports and land border crossings have prevented Yemenis from finding safety abroad. But the war has displaced four million Yemenis internally—the fourth highest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) globally.² Yemenis are trapped in a country where their most basic needs cannot be met, where warring parties are destroying lives at every turn—from the missiles and artillery shells that decimate the infrastructure civilians depend on to purposeful currency manipulation that prices families out of basic goods to constraints on the imports of food, fuel and medicines that jeopardize the humanitarian response.

Today half of all Yemenis cannot access clean water, two-thirds lack access to health care, and half of Yemenis are going hungry.³ In fact, more Yemenis have died and continue to suffer from these indirect impacts of war than from the violence itself. UNDP estimates that if the war lasts until 2022 there will be nearly half a million deaths. Two-thirds of these deaths would be due to the indirect impacts of the conflict.⁴

As the conflict enters its 7th year the situation continues to unravel; famine alarms are ringing louder than ever as 16 million Yemenis, over 50% of the population, are already going hungry. 50,000 may be experiencing famine-like conditions with 5 million more on the brink.⁵ Half of all children under the age of 5 are acutely malnourished—the highest levels ever recorded—and 400,000 children are at risk of dying without treatment.⁶

COVID-19 has been devastating in Yemen—both in terms of its direct health impacts but arguably more from its impacts on the economy. And a second wave is descending on the country with case counts jumping by nearly 400% in March and a frighteningly high case fatality rate that indicates the real case numbers are likely much higher.⁷ But the pandemic that is at the forefront of Americans’ minds barely registers for our clients given the severity of all the other crises facing them. They repeatedly tell us they are more concerned about hunger than COVID-19.

My colleagues report that families that were barely making it through the crisis are now no longer able to do so. After 6 years of conflict and economic crisis, many Yemenis have exhausted their savings and sold off all valuable assets like property or livestock. Families are making decisions no family should have to; some are pulling their children out of school and sending them to work or to beg in the streets or marrying off daughters to drive down household expenses. The rate of forced and early marriage of girls has more than doubled since the war started with as many as two-thirds of Yemeni girls married while they are still children.⁸

PUSHED TO BRINK BY CONFLICT, ECONOMIC COLLAPSE, AND CONSTRAINTS ON ACCESS

We have no right to be shocked by these numbers or the warning of famine yet again in Yemen. To describe this unraveling as a tragedy would miss the point. Yemen's cycle of crisis is not an accident. It is the predictable outcome of political failure and a war that has put civilians—and the systems that sustain them—in the crosshairs. A hunger crisis is what happens when nearly 1,000 markets, farms and food storage locations are bombed.⁹ When health facilities are unable to function and treat illnesses like malnutrition—because they have been bombed, or lack fuel for power, or basic supplies to care for patients. When the international community cuts aid in half and 5 million fewer Yemenis are able to access life-saving aid each month.¹⁰

Yemen has topped IRC's annual Watchlist for 3 years running—not just as the world's worst crisis but as the one at greatest risk of further deterioration. Because while the crisis is protracted it is by no means static. It continues to plumb new depths due to intensifying violence, economic warfare, and continued constraints on humanitarian access—all conducted without regard for civilian welfare and carried out with impunity. Yemenis are forced to confront each new shock with fewer resources and resilience.

First, conflict is escalating—forcing Yemenis to contend not just with the war's destructive legacy but its continued daily horrors.

Yemenis are suffering from the effects of 6 years of a cruelly conducted war that has eroded resilience and coping strategies and made recovery nearly impossible. Since 2015, there have been ten air raids every day, on average. In attacks where the target could be identified, nearly half hit civilian infrastructure. Over the course of the war, an airstrike has hit a school roughly every 6 days; a water or electricity site every 2 weeks. Markets have been attacked every 10 days; farms every 3 days despite a hunger crisis.¹¹

Over 130,000 people have been killed as a direct result of the violence.¹² Last year, an airstrike hit a residential site on average every 3 days¹³—making the home the most likely place where a Yemeni civilian is injured or killed.¹⁴ Women and children are at even higher risk when conflict reaches residential areas. As a result, one in four deaths is a child.¹⁵

These are shocking indictments of the warring parties, who have spurned international humanitarian law with impunity. A 2020 report from the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen found that war crimes have likely been committed by all sides to the conflict and yet there have been no meaningful attempts at accountability.¹⁶

Yemenis live in fear of the next escalation. After a relative lull since late 2018, conflict activity is spiking. The number of front lines exploded from 33 to 49 in 2020.¹⁷ Airstrikes by the Saudi-led Coalition rose by 82% in 2020 compared to 2019—the first increase in 3 years.¹⁸ Over the past year, fighting has escalated in Marib governorate, where millions of Yemenis had fled in search of safety. Marib's population today is estimated to be up to ten times higher than the pre-war population.¹⁹ This safe haven is now in the crosshairs. For the past year, Marib has been bombed and shelled more than any other Yemeni governorate. In the first quarter of 2021, Marib saw the war's second-highest deaths in a single governorate—only surpassed by Hodeidah in late 2018.²⁰ Conflict also increased in both Hodeidah and Taiz while Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes nationwide nearly doubled last month.²¹

But this is more than a two-sided fight between Houthi and anti-Houthi forces. This conflict is also a fragmented set of local power struggles. Across the South, IRC's ability to deliver life-saving programming has been disrupted by rounds of conflict between fighters loyal to the IRG and those aligned with the Southern Transitional Council (STC). The two sides signed a power-sharing deal known as the Riyadh Agreement in 2019 but implementation largely stalled. Nonetheless, tensions persist and southern Yemen gets more fragmented with additional armed groups emerging trying to seize political power and economic resources in some parts of southern Yemen. Our staff in Aden report that they simply do not know who is responsible for governance and security of people in southern Yemen.

The uncertainty and insecurity creates conditions that are ripe for other groups to exploit. In the southern governorate of Abyan, there have been dozens of carjackings in recent weeks, including of NGO vehicles. At least some of those thefts are carried out by, or on behalf of, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. IRC made the difficult decision to halt programs in Abyan for the past 2 months despite rising need. The STC's success in pushing its way to the negotiating table in Riyadh through the use of force also risks teaching other groups that the best way to see their interests represented in future political talks is by further destabilizing the south.

Second, the economy is collapsing—both as a result of the violence and economic warfare carried out without regard for civilians.

The Yemeni economy is not just a victim of this brutal conflict but increasingly a driver of it, as parties compete for control of key resources and institutions at the expense of ordinary Yemenis. For example, the Central Bank of Yemen is divided into rival branches in Sanaa and Aden in 2016. The causes of Yemen's economic crisis are complex and interconnected, but the effect on the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen is clear. Between them, the de facto authorities in Sanaa and the IRG in Aden have failed to pay salaries for many civil servants, depriving millions of Yemenis of their incomes with a ripple effect on the collapse of basic public services. As a result, remittances became a lifeline for many of the 80 percent of Yemenis living in poverty, worth an estimated fifth of Yemen's GDP in 2019.²² Last year, the pandemic led to a sharp 80 percent drop in remittances, as Yemenis living outside the country have lost their jobs and become unable to send money back to their families.²³

Meanwhile, a combination of mismanagement and economic posturing has left the split Central Bank unable to stabilize the Yemeni currency; the Rial's value has fallen by 75% in the South and by two-thirds in the North since the war began.²⁴ The Central Bank's inability to fund essential imports has had an equally devastating impact in the import-dependent country. Prices have soared and purchasing power plummeted—the price of rice has quadrupled since the start of the war.²⁵ Three in five Yemenis surveyed by the IRC could not afford basic items, leading two-thirds of them to reduce food consumption. Moreover, COVID-19's disruptions to the global supply chains widened cracks in the country's already fragile economy.

Asrar, one of IRC's clients, has told IRC staff she cannot afford food for herself and her seven children. "We can't buy anything these days with the price increases." She added, "If we buy flour, then we won't be able to buy sugar and oil. We can't afford to buy everything." Another client, Mohammed, says rising prices contributed to his family reducing food consumption and his 5-year-old daughter becoming malnourished. "We were not even able to visit the hospital or buy medicine because it is so expensive."

Yet commercial imports to northern Yemen through Hodeidah and Saleef ports remain slowed and disrupted by inspection regimes and administrative delays, even as these ports are located near an estimated 70 percent of people in need of humanitarian aid.²⁶ While food imports have arrived in steady quantities in recent months, fuel has been in dangerously short supply. In recent years, disputes over import revenues have added additional obstacles to the already duplicative import inspection regime, in which both U.N. and Saudi clearance are required.

A new phase of economic warfare has occurred since June, when, according to the U.N. Panel of Experts, Ansar Allah withdrew more than \$1.9 billion in customs revenues from the Hodeidah Central Bank in violation of the Stockholm Agreement. In response, the IRG's economic committee, responsible for issuing permits for fuel tankers to berth and discharge vital petroleum derivatives, has aimed to slow or stop the import of fuel to northern Yemen. In the first quarter of 2021, fuel imports through these two ports only met seven percent of the country's national requirements.²⁷ After more than 2 months without a single fuel ship docking in the North, four ships were finally allowed to dock last month. Three more were reportedly cleared last week.²⁸ But hundreds of thousands of metric tons of desperately needed fuel still sit on ships just offshore of Yemen's port of Hodeidah—held hostage as the warring parties bicker.

Fuel shortages undermine health services as hospitals cannot keep their generators running, disrupt clean water supplies because pumps and water trucks cannot run, and increase the overall cost of humanitarian assistance as fuel can only be procured through more expensive informal markets. NGO staff in Ansar Allah-controlled areas are reporting a 50 percent price increase in water trucking since December.

Third, and finally, humanitarian aid and access are treated as bargaining chips.

The destruction of health, water, and other infrastructure combined with the unraveling of public services and skyrocketing prices mean that two in three Yemenis are in need of life-saving aid. Yet all parties to the conflict have complicated and slowed our efforts to deliver principled, needs-based assistance to Yemenis.

While there were some improvements, humanitarian actors like the IRC continue to face a byzantine set of bureaucratic constraints and administrative delays, in both the North and the South. These types of constraints accounted for over 90 percent of all humanitarian access incidents last year. As a result, around 9 million Yemenis were affected by delayed or interrupted aid at some point last year. Right now, as many as 3.5 million people are currently being affected by delayed approval of projects.²⁹

Unclear and arbitrary processes and capacity constraints at the few accessible air and sea ports slow the import and offloading of critical—often perishable—humanitarian supplies like food and medicines. The main point of entry for humanitarian cargo is Aden port, which requires NGOs to manage lengthy customs clearance processes. Meanwhile, one of the only two ways to import humanitarian cargo to northern Yemen is by driving a 300-mile road from Aden to Sanaa through 50 checkpoints and informal customs set up by Ansar Allah after obtaining another permit from Ansar Allah in addition to IRG. Sanaa airport has been closed to commercial traffic for nearly 5 years and only humanitarian flights are operating, including humanitarian cargo, though again, only after lengthy and complicated import approvals. The airport's closure also means that thousands of Yemenis are unable to seek healthcare outside of the country each year—likely resulting in the premature and unnecessary deaths of tens of thousands since 2016.

It can also take months to obtain visas for aid workers, line ministry approvals needed to launch humanitarian programs, and the permits required to travel to program locations and conduct assessments. Even when supplies clear and staff receive approvals, challenges remain.

A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF CRISIS

For too long, the needs and protection of Yemeni civilians rated low—if at all—on the priority lists of not just the warring parties, but their international backers—including the U.S. Yemen policy was about counter-terrorism, Yemen policy was about Gulf security. It was rarely, if ever, about Yemenis. The U.S. approved over \$64 billion in military sales to Saudi Arabia between 2015 and 2020³⁰—20 times the amount of humanitarian aid the U.S. provided to Yemen during that time frame.³¹

As such, we are grateful for the sustained Congressional pressure that has helped drive U.S. policy away from a failed war strategy. On the humanitarian front, it is still possible to change the trajectory of the crisis, to prevent the worst outcomes like famine. Recent policy decisions by the Biden administration—like reversing the terrorist designation of Ansar Allah and the end of the U.S. suspension of aid to northern Yemen—have helped create this window of opportunity. These were meaningful first steps to enable a robust humanitarian response for all those in need—but must be followed by funding and humanitarian diplomacy to enable aid organizations to scale up.

Our humanity compels us to stave off famine and meet immediate needs. But as the conflict enters its 7th year, our logic must compel us to lift our line of sight above the symptoms of this crisis and shift towards addressing the crisis at the source.

We welcome the Biden administration's pivot toward invigorated diplomacy—including ending support for offensive operations, pausing arm sales, and appointing a new special envoy. These are vital first steps toward putting Yemen and Yemenis at the center of U.S. policy and help position the U.S. as a more neutral actor and convenor of a multilateral process to end the war. But the cyclical humanitarian nightmare demands more new and bold political thinking and action.

Yemenis cannot wait for a political solution to receive relief. The urgency of humanitarian need—including looming famine—demands that the international community move forward on two tracks—delinking the immediate efforts needed to ease suffering from the wider political process. Now is the time to do both the urgent work to save lives and the important work to end the cruel conflict driving the need—without making one contingent on the other.

First, rally more humanitarian funding to fill the dangerous funding gap. Right now, the U.N.'s appeal for the largest crisis in the world is only 25 percent funded.³² Recent history has proved that the right investments, delivered to the right agencies on the front line can make a difference in Yemen. In 2018, when famine conditions

were declared, generous and timely contributions from donors enabled the U.N. and NGOs to significantly scale up the humanitarian response. Donors funded nearly 90 percent of the humanitarian response plan and humanitarians nearly doubled the number of Yemenis reached that year³³ and cured a higher percentage of children with severe acute malnutrition than any comparable response.³⁴ These steps saved lives.

Warding off famine in 2021 demands funding at least equal to that delivered in 2018 and 2019. The U.S. should support the Swiss and Swedish (this year's donor conference co-hosts) proposal for a follow-on conference in 3-months' time. Some donors have expressed frustration at the lack of political progress, but punishing ordinary Yemenis for the intransigence of the warring parties is as foolish as it is cruel. The Administration's move to lift the suspension in the North of the country gives them more moral authority to push other donors—and we encourage the U.S. to leverage it. But pledges on paper will not save lives; only half of this year's pledges have been paid. The U.S. should rapidly disperse funds to frontline humanitarians who are on the ground and ready to scale up operations and pressure other donors to do the same.

Second, protect and expand humanitarian access across Yemen. Humanitarian aid must be able to reach those who need it. NGOs need coordinated, sustained, high-level engagement between U.N. and donor countries with Ansar Allah in the North and with the IRG and STC in the South to remove persistent bureaucratic and administrative barriers. The scale and reach of the humanitarian response would grow significantly if the U.S. and its partners pushed all Yemeni authorities to streamline the processes and timelines for moving humanitarian goods and staff into and around the country and for securing project permissions and travel permits. Working with the U.N. and in consultation with humanitarian actors—to ensure consistent, principled messaging—the U.S. should galvanize donors to establish senior-level humanitarian dialogues with officials in the North and the South, building on previously agreed benchmarks and measures. The need to distribute COVID-19 vaccines brings new urgency to this effort.

Third, facilitate the flow of commercial and humanitarian imports into and throughout the import-dependent country. Even with more humanitarian funding and access, the magnitude of the needs will outweigh the humanitarian response until food, fuel and other staples are accessible and affordable for more Yemenis. The U.S. should push for all air and sea ports to be reopened to humanitarian and commercial traffic; and for inspection and clearance processes for vital imports to be streamlined or eliminated. Moreover, the opening of Sanaa airport will finally allow thousands of chronically ill Yemenis to access lifesaving care abroad. The IRG should immediately allow fuel ships to berth at Hodeidah. At the same time, civil servant salary payments should restart without delay. Getting these payments into Yemeni pockets would have the dual benefit of generating income for millions and rebuilding capacity of state service delivery. These steps are not political bargaining chips; they are urgent humanitarian matters. Every day that they are delayed costs Yemeni lives. Sequencing or conditioning these steps shows callous disregard for Yemeni lives and wellbeing.

Fourth, push for an immediate nationwide ceasefire. A ceasefire is urgently needed to protect civilians and enable aid to flow, including food and emergency cash distributions to ward off famine and the distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations. The U.S. should use all diplomatic levers to secure a ceasefire, including pressing other states with influence over the warring parties to similarly halt arms sales.

Fifth, press for a new framework for a political process. Ceasefires are fragile and temporary at best. This conflict is ravaging civilians purposefully and a sustained political settlement is the only pathway out of the humanitarian crisis. But diplomacy has been stuck in the past—built on a framework that does not reflect current realities on the ground. The warring parties remain caught in a cycle of arguing over sequencing and who must do what first while trying to change the facts on the ground militarily to better their negotiating position. While the Security Council's statement last week was welcome, Yemenis need and deserve a concrete roadmap to turn these ideas into action and ensure the proposals on the table don't languish at the expense of ordinary Yemenis. The U.S.—together with the UK as the U.N. Security Council “penholder” on the file—should move the Security Council past politics to concentrate on the people caught in the crisis. Council action, including a new resolution that is centered on the needs of Yemenis, is more politically inclusive and representative of Yemeni society, and sets out the responsibilities of all the parties, would offer the badly needed break from the past.

Council action should address the thorniest issues including the economic disputes—such as revenue sharing and Central Bank arrangements—that are increasingly driving the conflict and humanitarian misery. These issues are largely left out

of the existing Security Council Resolution (or worse, exploited by parties) and what little is codified in the Stockholm Agreement has been ignored and a source of the stalemate.

As we do in challenging environments all over the world, humanitarians like my IRC colleagues have stayed and delivered in Yemen in the midst of a complex and deteriorating crisis. But there is no humanitarian solution for Yemen or Yemenis. Humanitarians cannot replace a functioning economy or a state capable of delivering basic services; we cannot keep pace with the destruction this brutal conflict leaves in its wake. Yemenis will continue to suffer and die needlessly unless and until the violence is halted, the economy stabilized, and a meaningful political process is launched.

The U.S. has the opportunity to build on its unilateral efforts to push forward multilateral steps to finally address the underlying drivers of the crisis. We owe it to the Yemeni people to pursue it vigorously. After all, the darkest aspect of modern warfare is the absence of diplomacy.

I offer my sincere thanks to the Subcommittee for its commitment to Yemen and Yemenis and for giving me the opportunity to share the challenges facing my IRC colleagues and our clients. I look forward to answering your questions.

Notes

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Senator MURPHY. Thank you to both, and I apologize for having to be at the vote for the majority of your testimony, and for that reason, I will turn it back over to Senator Young to ask the opening round of questions.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman.

Ms. Grande, Ms. Catanzano—I am sorry, I keep mispronouncing your name—thanks again, both, for your years of service and for your presence here today.

Ms. Catanzano, your testimony described Yemen’s cycle of crisis. I, too, am deeply worried about Yemen reaching a point where we lose multiple generations of Yemenis to this conflict, whether from being permanently displaced, lack of good education, or worse yet, losing their life as a result of the ongoing violence.

This is why, despite the Houthis’ despicable behavior, I oppose the previous Administration’s decision to use an overly broad label and list them as a foreign terrorist organization.

Now, I understand that an FTO designation would only bring more suffering to those Yemenis who live in Houthi-controlled areas as it would cut them off from the lifesaving humanitarian aid that they need to survive.

But, unfortunately, as we were discussing earlier, the Houthis seem emboldened in recent weeks, despite these actions from the Biden administration.

Some of this was addressed in your testimonies, but I am going to ask for a few questions. Either of you can pipe up because I think each of you covered various facets of it.

But just to ensure that those who are listening in properly understand the magnitude of this humanitarian crisis, I think it is very important.

So, approximately, how many people require humanitarian assistance in Yemen?

Ms. CATANZANO. Over 20 million people require humanitarian assistance, about two-thirds of the population.

Senator YOUNG. So perspective for my constituents back home, that is, roughly, three times the population of the state of Indiana. The math is a little off. We have 6.75 million people, give or take, but that is, roughly, three times our state's population.

What percent of the population requires humanitarian assistance in Yemen?

Ms. CATANZANO. It is about two-thirds of the population.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. So okay. I think you just said that. So this is—this has been an increase from last year, right?

Ms. CATANZANO. Actually, it is a bit of a decrease from last year. But OCHA and the U.N. warns that it is less about it being a decrease in those who need but more about assessments and ability to survey who is in need. So they would warn us not to read too much into that—

Senator YOUNG. So this is a data issue. Okay.

Ms. CATANZANO. Data issue rather than facts on the ground.

Senator YOUNG. That starts to become—it is important, but it starts to become boring. So we will move on.

How many are severely food insecure?

Ms. CATANZANO. About half the population is food insecure, 16 million.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. How many children are severely malnourished? Do you have any sense of that?

Ms. GRANDE. 2.3 million right now and 1.3 million women who are either pregnant or lactating are severely malnourished.

Senator YOUNG. Okay, thank you. It is not—this is not a game of “Jeopardy.” This is not a trivia show. This is real life, and, obviously, I am trying to create a picture here for those who are listening in.

I understand the gravity of the situation and what is causing incredible hardship and destabilization and, ultimately, radicalization and a greater terrorist threat.

So we have the convergence of a number of different crises on account of these different dynamics.

One of the things I am going to ask you, Ms. Grande, you listed off four different steps that we should take and Ms. Catanzano listed off a number of other steps to redress some of this and help mitigate this crisis.

But, ultimately, we need to pressure the Houthis to change their behavior. Kindly elaborate on that very important point.

Ms. GRANDE. It is really hard to do it, Senator. It is one of the reasons when I was giving the testimony, you know, I was really clear that in 2018 when the country was facing famine the first time, of the four things that I listed that need to be done, three of those were done and the famine was avoided.

You know, it is very rare that you actually stop a famine, and because of the generosity of the U.S. Government and other donors, because of the heroic work of frontline partners like IRC and the U.N., it was stopped.

If we do not do those three things and one more this time, that famine is going to hit. Now, the additional factor this time is dealing with Ansar Allah, the Houthis behavior.

In 2018, they had not introduced hundreds of restrictions against the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and they have now. They

now have constructed a state within a state. It is a coercive predatory police state.

Can we beat the famine with that police state intact? I am not sure. Now, how you pressure the Houthis to change their behavior is a very difficult question to answer. Do you hit them really hard and hope they change their behavior? Not clear.

Do you give them some incentives and hope that they change their behavior? They are not responding very well to those incentives right now, which raises the deeply uncomfortable question about how their behavior is going to be changed.

Now, there are some other possibilities, of course. Perhaps the people who are supporting them can finally say to the Houthis, you do not get to do this anymore. That might be something.

But that, of course, would be part, as the Special Envoy has said, as a much bigger diplomatic initiative, not just on Yemen but that includes other parts of the region as well.

Senator YOUNG. Just sounds unprecedentedly complicated and, therefore, even history may not provide us a particularly good guide. But so grateful for your work. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much.

Ms. Grande, just tell me what has changed between 2018 and 2020 that has prompted the Houthis to put up, as you refer to, literally hundreds of individual barriers to aid? What is different?

Ms. GRANDE. Senator, it is a great question and I was actually the one on the ground, the one person that every single day talked to Houthis upside down, inside out, and all around.

What changed was that rather than the Houthis being the custodian of the state apparatus in northern Yemen, they, first of all, tried to transform it, take it over, capture it, and the parts of the apparatus that they did not think were working in their interest they have constructed a completely separate one.

It was very noticeable. Literally, from one month to the next, the interaction of Ansar Allah with the United Nations and other partners on the ground changed dramatically.

Now, it also coincided with shifts inside of the movement. As the Special Envoy noted, there are factions inside Ansar Allah, and the falcons, you know, the hardliners as they came into increasing power, you could see that their whole approach to their responsibilities as the occupiers of northern Yemen changed as a result.

That is what happened. Hardliners got on top of it and now control that movement and are driving it in a direction which may take it further and deeper into war rather than toward peace.

Senator MURPHY. And given that we do not have many people who have a greater knowledge of these internal dynamics, that hard line group—and I understand it is dangerous to apply these names to a very complicated movement—but these hardliners, by and large, are the faction that are more closely aligned with Iran?

Ms. GRANDE. Senator, I think that there are parts of the hardliner's constellation that you could definitely say that about. There are other parts of the hardliners which are driven by a different logic.

But, in general, you could definitely point in that direction and you would not be far off. There are parts of Ansar Allah which do not like being under the thumb of Iran.

They do not like it. They are very upfront about that. They are very open about it and they are continually looking for alternative ways of engaging with the international community. There are people within Ansar Allah like that.

Senator MURPHY. I think it is an incredibly important point, and you and I have talked about this at length. But there is, obviously, always a tendency to believe that these groups on the other side of the world are monolithic.

The Houthis are not monolithic, and while they, certainly, have drawn closer to Iran by necessity as this conflict has grown, there are elements of the Houthis that are uncomfortable with that that may provide us with some opportunity here.

But as you note, the overall trend line in behavior, regardless of who is connected to Iran and who is not, is just devastating when it comes to the people in areas controlled by the Houthis.

Second question for you, Ms. Grande, about the overall state of the economy. We focus on this question of fuel imports. But it is important to note that we are arguing over fuel imports because nothing else is getting in. There is a few staple food goods that get in and fuel.

But tell us the story of the rest of the blockade and how that affects the Yemeni economy. It is really hard to have a functioning economy when all you let into the country through the main port are fuel and six categories of food products.

Obviously, things get in other ways, but there is a cost to that. A functioning economy is very difficult when you have such a restriction on items being brought into the country, correct?

Ms. GRANDE. That is absolutely right. I think in describing the war as having two fronts—a military front and an economic front—what we are pointing to is that it is the economic front. It is economic warfare, which has destroyed that country and brought it to its knees.

That is not to diminish the impact of the military front. It is not. But if you look at how many people have been wounded and killed on the military front is 20,000.

How many people have died, conservatively, from the second front? 130,000 and counting. Why is the country facing its second famine in 2½ years? Because of the second front.

That is where the heart of this war is, and the cord that are the restrictions on every conceivable form of economic activity—credit, customs, capital flows, the Central Bank, the number of ships that get in, when they get in—that whole architecture is what is driving this humanitarian crisis.

You want to end the crisis? Stop economic warfare. Stop it.

Senator MURPHY. Yeah. Yeah.

Ms. GRANDE. And overnight, I guarantee the situation will improve. The U.N. did some back of the envelope calculations of how many people we would not have to feed if that second front were shut down.

The World Food Programme and frontline partners would be able to immediately, within just a few months, significantly reduce by tens of percentage points how many people we have to feed. It is that obvious. You know, this is an income famine. People cannot

afford to pay for the food that is in the country at the price point it is there at.

Now, how do you solve that? You get more income into the hands of the people who need to buy things. You lower the overall cost of food and basic commodities, and you do that by letting these goods circulate freely.

Now, the second front denies that, and that is why it has got to stop.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Ms. Grande.

Ms. Catanzano, you may have covered some of this in your testimony but I wanted to come back to this question of the humanitarian appeal for this year.

I take everything that has been said about the inability to service people while the conflict exists. I understand that there is no way to do this effectively no matter how much money we have so long as there is this level of active conflict on the ground.

But that number of what percentage of the appeal has been funded this year is really scary, and I am sure you might have covered this in your testimony.

But if you might be able to elaborate on what that means to have 20 percent of the appeal funded versus 100 percent or 80 percent, and then, you know, what the way out is, right. What are the reasons why our partners and, particularly, the Emiratis and the Saudis are pledging less this year than they have in the past? How do we—how do we find a way to get to a better number?

Ms. CATANZANO. Thank you, Chairman Murphy.

I think it is a really important point for us to focus on for a number of reasons.

As you mentioned, the humanitarian appeal is funded at less than 25 percent so far this year, and the donor's conference that was held last month was really disappointing in terms of the money that was put on the table.

What that means, in effect, is this is the second year where we have seen those disappointing results when it comes to donors coming to the table.

Last year at the beginning of 2020, the humanitarian response was meeting the needs of about 14 million Yemenis every month. That has steadily had to decline to about 9 million Yemenis per month as a result of that underfunding.

So while the fighting keeps us from accessing those in need and all of the bureaucratic constraints in the north but, quite frankly, also in the south that Ms. Grande has alluded to keep us from reaching people in need, the single biggest barrier to humanitarians doing their work is this lack of funding and it has been evident in the numbers that we have seen.

We see how malnutrition numbers are now at a record. Half of Yemeni children under the age of 5 are acutely malnourished; 400,000 of them are at risk of dying without additional treatment.

That is a direct result of these numbers going down the way that they have. The needs are going up, but donors are coming to the table with a lot less generosity.

Part of what we are hearing from some donors is they are frustrated with the lack of political progress in Yemen. We are all frustrated with the lack of political progress in Yemen. It is the conflict

that is driving this need on both dimensions—as Ms. Grande said, the military and the economic fronts.

But what we know is that Yemenis are bearing that cost, and they are not responsible for the lack of political progress. So we think we really need the U.S. to put pressure on these donors to not make their contributions contingent on political progress.

Humanitarian aid should not have strings attached. I think that is—we heard Mr. Lenderking’s commitment today to endorse a follow-on donors conference, which was an offer put on the table by this year’s hosts right at the moment of the previous donors conference because it was such a disappointment. They said right on that day, we need to do this again, and I think that is important.

And I think the U.S. now has a bit more moral authority to rally those donors to the table, having lifted the suspension in northern Yemen that had been on place last year.

Every dollar matters when the catastrophe is this big, and so the willingness of the U.S. to move forward and bring that money to bear in the north will help them galvanize other donors and encourage them not just to write to—to pledge but to turn those promises into real dollars quickly because promises of money do not save lives.

That money needs to be moved quickly to frontline agencies with the ability to scale up.

And as Ms. Grande mentioned earlier, we saw in 2018 and 2019 when the humanitarian appeal was fully funded and humanitarians were able to scale up we averted the worst outcomes.

We could do that again. That knowledge and that ability is still there in country. It just needs the funding to start—to kick into action.

Senator MURPHY. One final question to follow up.

Amongst those donors is the United States. Could the United States do more to lead by example and ask others to follow, especially if we are going to be convening a second sort of mission-directed donors conference?

Ms. CATANZANO. I think the U.S. could do more. I think the U.S. also has an important convening role to play. It is not just about the size of the check that the U.S. writes, but its ability to bring others to the table.

The U.K. has been particularly disappointing this year with their pledges. I think pressure needs to be brought to bear on the U.K.

If they want to be the pen holder at the Security Council, they also need to be willing to bring their contributions to the table for the humanitarian response.

So it is both about more U.S. funding, but it is also about U.S. using its leverage to bring those donors to the table. And like you mentioned, the Saudis and the Emiratis, while they did bring funding to the table this year and the UAE had not last year, it is at far lower rates than we have seen in the past.

So that is another set of donors that I think the U.S. really needs to be banging on.

Senator MURPHY. Yeah. Just to put it on the record, the Saudis each gave around half a billion dollars in 2019. That is a substantial amount of money, no doubt. But these are the actors that have been primarily responsible for continuing to fuel this conflict.

The Saudis have pledged \$430 million, significantly less, and the Emiratis have only pledged \$230 million this year. So that is, in part, what explains our shortfall?

Senator Young?

Senator YOUNG. Just an observation and a reflection as we prepare to close here.

We, Americans, I think, have a cultural penchant most especially towards trying to solve problems, and in a sort of geopolitical context, oftentimes, it has been said that you need to manage problems, really hard problems, and sometimes you need to manage them until they can be solved.

And so I think this hearing has been particularly informative to me about itemizing and articulating some ways that we can be constructive managers partnering with this Administration, partnering with other countries, pressuring other countries and individuals and stakeholders where necessary in order to mitigate some of the carnage and violence and threats of violence that we see.

Working to ensure that sufficient aid is provided by our Gulf partners, pressuring some of our European partners, some of our closest friends, and they know who they are who have not stepped up and put forward the pledge funding or the expected funding, ensuring the United States continues to lead the way when it comes to these sorts of initiatives.

Working through the U.N. Security Council and the U.N. General Assembly where possible to advance some of the items that you vocalized, opening up channels for NGOs to continue providing assistance, such vital assistance. Be wise and discerning when it comes to our foreign military sales decisions on this committee of jurisdiction, rather than as a matter of course sort of agreeing with whatever Administration might be in charge or not dedicating sufficient time and scrutiny to those sales.

And looking for opportunity, looking for lines of opportunity to apply that pressure on the Houthis. We will identify moments. We will identify pressure points.

They may not be clear to us right now but they will emerge and we have to be looking for them, again, working by, with, and through partners and allies. So I just thank you all for your dedicated, tireless, and passionate service.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I commend you for chairing this most informative subcommittee here.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you. I am going to ask one final question, to ask Ms. Grande, to close this out, and that is to just point us forward.

Let us leave on an optimistic note that we can create the conditions through U.S. diplomacy and Mr. Lenderking's efforts to arrange for a ceasefire and that we are in a discussion about what a political framework looks like for the future of Yemen.

This is not impossible. There are all sorts of signs that this is something that can be achieved. And so just give us a sense of what that framework can look like if a nationwide ceasefire is achieved.

Who would be part of these negotiations? Is there a sort of practical outline that we can identify about what Yemen may look like 5 years from now if we are able to get beyond this emergency?

Ms. GRANDE. That is a really good question and a really difficult one to answer because the working approach to the national reckoning or national dialogue is that the people who have taken up arms are the ones who have to sit at the table. Of course, that is obvious and, yes, they should.

But I was very pointed in my comment in saying that there is something really nasty about allowing the future of Yemen to be in the hands of the elites who have destroyed the country and brought misery.

I think there is also a perverse incentive in that formula. If you want to get to the table, how do you do it? You take up arms. We see this in a number of political forces who are looking at the table, want to join it, and have staked out a position now that is far more militarized—securitized than it would have been before because of that perverse logic.

So how do you change that? You start a process right now, a pre-dialogue, where all of the political representatives, all the parties that have aspirations to represent the will of the people, sit at the table. The military folks sit at the table. You put the women's groups, the youth groups, and the tribal leaders—who all throughout this crisis have been stepping into the void created by the breakdown of judicial systems and provided adjudication to the community at the table.

Bring in the intelligentsia and the private sector that is going to have to rebuild the country. Put all of those people in the table now—this is something that the Special Envoy hinted at—and you set a direction for the future, one that will be involving all of the components of civil society and the military and the political components in a way which can be fruitful and forward looking.

That would be a start.

Senator MURPHY. It is why I included in my question a query as to who should be at that table, because that determines what the table talks about and what the result of that conversation is, I think an important expectation to set—a hopeful one—that we can get to that conversation.

Thank you for testifying, both to you and to the Special Envoy. We appreciate your insights and recommendations to the committee.

The record is going to remain open for questions for the record until Friday at 6:00 p.m.

And with that, this hearing will conclude.

[Whereupon, at 3:34 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF TIMOTHY LENDERKING TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY

Question. The most recent fuel crisis continues a disturbing pattern of cyclical stop-and-go imports and tactics of war many have termed simply as “the blockade”. The current commercial fuel crisis is impacting food transporters and processors, hospitals, schools, business, and homes. The inaction and finger pointing by the

warring parties is hot air to the millions of civilians trapped in the middle who suffer the consequences and inch closer towards famine.

What concrete steps will you and the U.S. Government take to push the IRG and Saudis to allow the free flow of fuel into Yemen's northern ports?

Answer. The United States opposes restrictions that arbitrarily delay or deny essential commodities from getting to the people who need them the most, including through Hudaydah port. The Secretary personally engaged the Yemeni Prime Minister on this issue and as a result we have seen seven fuel ships recently move into Hudaydah port. I will continue to raise the issue of timely and regular delivery of fuel at the highest levels of the Yemeni and Saudi governments. Yemen's humanitarian crisis is a result of over 6 years of war and the collapse of the economy and social services; the only way to reverse this is to end the conflict.

Question. Do you agree that the current lack of fuel in the northern markets is exacerbating Houthi war profiteering as they move to smuggle fuel from the south and exploit black market sales with skyrocketing prices?

Answer. Yes. Any illicit movement of fuel throughout Yemen serves ongoing Houthi military offensives in Marib and throughout Yemen. Even legitimately offloaded fuel faces a high risk of Houthi diversion for improper use. The United States opposes restrictions that arbitrarily delay or deny essential commodities from getting into Yemen and to the people who need them the most, including through Hudaydah port. We will continue to advocate and raise at the highest levels the need for unimpeded flow of fuel and other commodities throughout all of Yemen.

Question. Have any parties to the conflict indicated to you that this fuel blockade is in any way an attempt to slow the Houthi's violent and reckless Marib offensive, or to bring the Houthis to the negotiating table? Have you made clear to the IRG, Saudi Arabia, and partners that withholding fuel, and intentionally causing a humanitarian crisis could constitute war crimes?

Answer. I have made it clear that the United States opposes restrictions that arbitrarily delay or deny essential commodities from getting to the people who need them the most, including through Hudaydah port. It is one of my highest priorities to make sure that aid reaches those in need. Unfortunately, once fuel and other goods pass through the port, they face additional obstruction and bureaucratic hurdles from the Houthis and other actors. Yemen's humanitarian crisis is the result of over 6 years of war and the collapse of the economy and social services. The only way to reverse this crisis is to end the conflict.

Question. The ticking time bomb of the SAFER tanker continues to threaten humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen and the Horn of Africa. A spill would devastate the ecosystem of the Red Sea and halt trade in one of the busiest waterways in the world. Getting an agreement to repair the SAFER should be a no-brainer confidence-building measure from which to build trust between the warring parties given the mutual benefits for all regardless of conflict dynamics.

Have you or anyone else in the U.S. Government had any recent conversations with any of the parties, or with United Nations Representatives to push for an agreement on SAFER repairs?

Answer. We engage on a daily basis with our European counterparts and the United Nations on this issue. The United States stands with the international community in calling upon the Houthis to allow a U.N. team aboard the ship to conduct an initial assessment. We have been disappointed by the roadblocks and delays by the Houthis that are the sole obstacle to the U.N. team's deployment. The U.N. Security Council—with our strong support—continues to call attention to this issue in its statements.

Question. On February 4, President Biden announced an end to support for "offensive" Saudi operations in Yemen. Can you describe the categories of operations and types of assistance that will be suspended, and what types of assistance, if any, that will continue?

Answer. The President ended U.S. support for offensive operations in Yemen, including relevant arms sales. To that end, the Administration has suspended two arms sales with Saudi Arabia and will continue to consult with Congress and to evaluate other potential sales to ensure they are consistent with U.S. values. The President also committed to maintaining support for Saudi Arabia's defense of its territory and people, and our military and security cooperation in furtherance of Saudi defense against cross-border attacks will continue.

Question. How will you ensure that any future support provided to Saudi Arabia doesn't intentionally or unintentionally aid efforts that don't fit the definition of "offensive" operations?

Answer. We will continue to consult with Congress and regularly evaluate arms transfers to ensure they are consistent with our foreign policy goals, including a peaceful resolution to the Yemen conflict. The Department evaluates U.S. arms transfers against various criteria, including intended end use. The Secretary has been clear that we will not proceed with sales for which we assess that the end use is inconsistent with U.S. policy priorities.

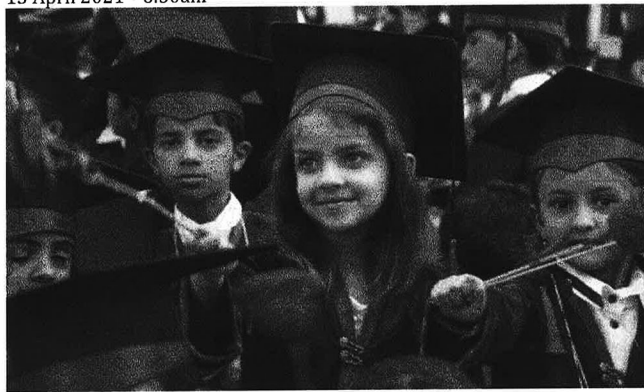
PRESS REPORT SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG: "HOUTHIS INDOCTRINATING CHILDREN IN YEMEN 'WITH VIOLENT, ANTI-SEMITIC AND EXTREMIST MATERIAL' " BY CAMPBELL MACDIARMID, DATED APRIL 15, 2021

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/04/15/houthis-indoctrinating-children-yemen-violent-anti-semitic-extremist/>

Houthis indoctrinating children in Yemen 'with violent, anti-Semitic and extremist material'

'The closest we have seen to being this is extreme is ISIS materials,' said one analyst

By Campbell MacDiarmid, Middle East Correspondent
15 April 2021 • 6:30am

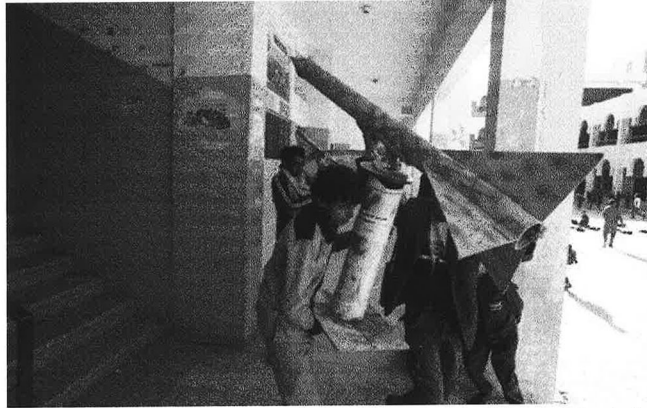


Three million Yemeni children living in areas under Houthi control are being indoctrinated with education material filled with violent, anti-Semitic propaganda, an official from the Yemeni Teachers Syndicate has told the Telegraph.

Yahya Al-Yinai, the union's head of media, said he had documented hundreds of changes to the teaching curriculum by the Iran-backed group, which since 2014 has fought a war against the government of Yemen.

The group has also replaced nearly 90 percent of school principals with pro-Houthi figures, he told The Telegraph.

Iran is overseeing the changes, he said, accusing Tehran of pursuing a "policy of cultural colonialism" by trying to introduce the "ideology of the Khomeinist revolution in Yemen through public education."



Yemeni students in Sanaa carry mock rockets at a school ahead of the sixth anniversary of the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen in March Credit: YAHYA ARHAB/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

The Houthis emerged from northern Yemen in the 1990s and were named after their original leader Hussein al Houthi, who returned from time in Iran inspired by the Islamic revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini.

Officially known as Ansar Allah, the Houthis today control an area of Yemen in which two-thirds of the population lives, including the capital Sanaa.

The group's worldview is reflected in its slogan, which translates as, "Allah is great, death to America, death to Israel, curse the Jews, victory to Islam," which was officially adopted after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The Houthis say the slogan is not to be taken literally. "We do not really want death to anyone," a spokesperson for the group said in 2014. "The slogan is simply against the interference of those governments."



Schoolgirls wearing facemasks listen to a lesson at a school in Sanaa Credit: Mohammed Hamoud /Getty Images Europe

Nonetheless it is being taught to children, alongside lessons encouraging them to fight the "tyranny of the Jews". A spelling exercise seen by The Telegraph asks students to write out the sentence "Israel is my enemy".

An issue of the pro-Houthi magazine Jihad, which is aimed at children, shows a photo of a young Yemeni girl lying on the ground next to a school

bag and exercise books, apparently dead. The caption reads: "She was killed on her way to school by an airstrike of the Saudi aggression."

"The graphic nature of the material really took us aback," said Marcus Sheff, who heads an Israel-based research, policy and advocacy organisation which produced a [recent report](#) reviewing Houthi educational material.

The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-se) report argues that the rebels have made education a core pillar of their campaign to increase their influence and that their teachings illustrate why they are resistant to peaceful conflict resolution.

In the material reviewed, "peace is explicitly dismissed as a form of 'capitulation', and people who advocate for it are framed as fools, cowards and even traitors," said Arik Agassi, the organisation's COO.



A Yemeni child and his sister recite prayers over graves in Sanaa of their relatives killed in the fighting Credit: Mohammed Hamoud /Getty Images Europe

This helps explain why the Iran-aligned group continues to fight, despite the best efforts of a Saudi-led Arab coalition.

In March, the Houthis rejected a Saudi-proposed ceasefire because it did not include lifting a blockade on Houthi-controlled areas. That air and sea embargo has been criticised for contributing to Yemen's near-famine conditions, which the United Nations describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Instead the group, which the US and other Western powers call an Iranian proxy force receives weapons from Iran, has increased attacks across the border into neighbouring Saudi Arabia.

Houthi educational material is suggestive of Iranian influence, according to IMPACT-se.

"A lot of these ideas do come from Iran, there's no question about it," said Mr Sheff. "This extreme idea of us and them, this Manichaeon idea of the universe, and the final battle that will be fought at the end and will result in victory and paradise. That's a Shiite Iranian view."



Yemeni students take their final school exams in Sanaa in AprilCredit: YAHYA ARHAB/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

The changes made to the curriculum are part of a broader Houthi strategy to instill their ideology across society, according to Nadwa Al-Dawsari, a non-resident fellow at the Middle East Institute.

"Beyond the curriculum, the Houthis have used schools as a means to recruit and indoctrinate children," she said. "In a lot of rural areas, the schools are closed and all students are learning are lectures by Hussein Al-Houthi, the founder of the Houthi movement, who was inspired by the Iranian revolution."

An official in the Houthi education ministry did not respond to requests for comment but the rebels have repeatedly blamed the Saudi-led air campaign for exposing Yemen's children to violence.

Mr Sheff says the Houthi education materials represent some of the more egregious violations of UNESCO standards of peace and tolerance in current Middle Eastern curricula that he has reviewed in 25 years of research.

"There are usually at least some restraints that other extremist states put on themselves with relation to their education materials but the Houthis seem to have no red lines," he said. "The closest we have seen to being this is extreme is ISIS materials."