

The next morning, the ICU nurse caring for my dad, who is not a basketball fan, told us that she'd checked the score on her way to work just so that she could tell him the good news. For us, that was a real act of care. His fandom was a part of his identity as a New Yorker. The Knicks gave us something hopeful to talk about even as we felt increasingly alarmed that he wasn't responding to that news, or anything else.

And then, there they were, our childhood heroes: Patrick Ewing, John Starks, Allan Houston, Latrell Sprewell, Larry Johnson, and all our favorite players, thirty years older, showing up to support this team that was, for the most part, not born when the Knicks last saw a division championship. It felt like they were coming together specially for my family. The whole city has awakened in a way only New Yorkers can—with innovative watching parties, public joy, orange and blue bagels, and signature snark that makes the city into a home.

My dad bestowed on my brother and me the gift of being part of the crowd. He taught us what it means to cheer through thick and thin, what it means to maintain hope, and that there is power in believing in something “just for fun.” I share the bond of fandom with friends who send me texts throughout every game even if we haven't spoken all year, and I thank my dad for bringing me into this community.

The day he died, we told my dad that the Knicks were one game away from the Eastern Conference title that he'd waited 27 years to see. We told him that they looked like they were going to sweep. We told him the Knicks were honoring him at MSG. We told him the wait was over, we told him we loved him.

You can't time grief. I know that writing this is an attempt to make sense of something that defies logic. I wondered if a Knicks win would exacerbate my grief, as many things seem to right now. I'd cried big slobbery tears when they won the East. But the road through the finals was filled with moments of pure joy and camaraderie, the drama of an historic comeback, and a team so likeable you can't help but smile. It has felt like a balm on this open wound. I think it's healing decades of strife for fans with people who didn't live to see this victory. Karl-Anthony Towns said after winning the championship that he felt like his mom, who many fans know died in 2020, helped pull some strings for this win. “Thank you, mama. I appreciate you getting me one,” he said. Every lifelong Knicks fan has someone like my dad who didn't get to see this championship, but believes they might have helped pull some strings, too.

I know my dad would not want our grief compounded by a Knicks loss. Being a Knicks fan in the '90s was an exercise in resilience. It taught us not to take anything for granted and I draw on those lessons today.

Now, even without my dad, my family cheers because being a fan in New York is a legacy we are tasked with carrying on. A chance to be part of something bigger than us. Something to cheer for through pain.

Go New York, Go New York, Go.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

IRAN

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise today to, once again, try to end President Trump's war of choice in Iran.

We are nearly 5 months into this war, with no end in sight. President Trump

and Pete Hegseth have spent at least \$37.5 billion on a war that Americans overwhelmingly oppose. Americans are footing the bill with their tax dollars and at the pump, as higher prices continue.

We have lost 18 American servicemembers, with hundreds more wounded. My heart is with the military families who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

Now, after months of chaos, Secretary Hegseth wants Congress to sign off on nearly \$70 billion for this illegal war—nearly \$70 billion more of our money to fund a war that Americans did not choose. That is \$70 billion that we could be using to bring down the cost of housing and help folks get their foot in the door to buy their very first home. That is \$70 billion that we could be using to help families afford childcare and allow parents to get back to work. And that is \$70 billion that we could be using to lower Americans' health insurance premiums, fund our rural hospitals, or put some of the damage from Republicans' cuts to Medicaid to rest—in other words, restore that money.

Instead, this President wants nearly \$70 billion for a war that is spiraling further out of control. That is his priority, not Americans' housing costs or insurance premiums, but rather a war across the globe that nobody asked for.

Even worse, we are 5 months into this war, and this administration refuses to give us straight answers about when this conflict will end.

It does not have to be this way. It is clear the only way to stop this war and find a political solution through diplomacy and tough negotiations is for Congress to force President Trump's hand. He started this war, and he is clearly incapable of ending it on his own.

So on behalf of all of our constituents who are paying the price, I urge my Republican colleagues to join us in bringing an end to this war before another American life is lost.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island—Oregon. I am sorry. Please forgive me.

IRAN

Mr. MERKLEY. Thank you. The Senator appreciates your pronunciation of my home State, which people across America have a hard time often figuring out.

Mr. President, I am here tonight joining my colleague from Wisconsin on a very serious topic: that our Nation is at war; that our servicemembers are dying; that for every one who dies, so many are injured—a war that is absolutely hurting us in every possible way.

Operation Epic Fury has become “Operation Epic Failure.”

On February 28, President Trump and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu launched this unconstitutional war against Iran.

President Trump was asked how long would this last. He said: 4 or 5 weeks. He talked about how our overwhelming military power would produce Iranian leaders who would plead—who would plead—for an unconditional surrender.

Mr. President, 16 weeks later, the war was still going on, but then there was agreement to a 14-point outline of a cease-fire agreement. But because it was just an outline, because the countries hadn't worked out their different understandings of the points, just as President Trump completely blotched the war, he completely blotched the negotiation; so it was back to war.

President Trump announced new strikes on Iran, and we are now in the 21st week of that 4- to 5-week war. Time and time again, leaders think they can launch a war and make a series of assumptions that prove to be wrong, and here we are again.

We were wrong with the assumption you could occupy Afghanistan and build something resembling a modern democratic nation.

We were wrong in spending our resources to attack Iraq, which was a counterbalance to Iran and undid this balance in a way that created Iranian influence through an arc that extended clear across to Lebanon.

You know, our Constitution clearly assigns the question of war to Congress. So to my Republican colleagues: Why aren't you insisting that Congress make this decision rather than the President?

Madison summarized: The Constitution supposes, what the history of all governments demonstrates, that the Executive is the branch of power most interested in war, and most prone to it. [The Constitution] has accordingly, with studied care, vested the question of war in the Legislative [branch].

That is us. That is us. It is not the President. And the reasoning was that an Executive can too easily make assumptions that something will be quick and easy, but you are committing the lives of our citizens—you are committing the treasure of the Nation—and that should require careful consideration. One person alone, our Founders said, should not be able to take a Republic to war. That is what Kings do. That is what authoritarian strongmen do. But we are not—need I remind you—a strongman authoritarian state—at least we are not by our Constitution. We are a democratic Republic, so let's start acting like it and let's start honoring the structure of our Constitution.

That structure assigns the power of the purse to Congress. So every single Senator should be down here protesting when the President cancels a program that has been authorized and funded. Every single Senator should be down here protesting when the President creates a slush fund to do projects that are not authorized and not funded—that is our responsibility. Unfortunately, this Chamber has failed, for the most part, to defend its role and to defend the Constitution.

We did have a concurrent resolution under the War Powers Act that directed the President to remove United States forces from hostilities with Iran, but the majority has acted like we didn't actually pass it, and the President has acted like it wasn't passed. And the majority has failed to protest to the President that he is not respecting the fact that it was passed.

If you can't stand behind the acts of this Chamber, if you can't stand behind the Constitution, then how far off track are we as a nation?

We just got through with a conversation about the fact that this Congress asked for a coin to be minted that reflected the values of our Nation upon our 250 years since our Declaration of Independence, but instead Trump did what dictators do, just as Caesar broke Roman tradition to put his face on a coin and to declare dictator forever, "dictator in perpetuity," just as King George III put his face on a coin to reflect that power came from him down to the people rather than flowing up from the people—that is a mega difference between an authoritarian state and a democratic republic.

The consequences of Trump's war of choice and the consequences of the Republican leadership's failure to exert their constitutional responsibility to end President Trump's war of choice is that 18 servicemembers are dead and hundreds and hundreds of Americans are badly injured.

Thousands of Iranian civilians are dead—including a whole lot of children, many of whom died from a strike by America, by President Trump's team, on a girl's elementary school.

The war strengthened Iran's hardliners—that is what happens when you assassinate the religious leaders and the political leaders—people rally to their country.

It weakened Iran's reformers who wanted to see a different path for their nation.

It enriched Russia. In fact, President Trump proceeded to say that we would no longer enforce the restriction on the Russian sale of oil so they could sell at the world price. Billions and billions of dollars flowed into Russia because of this war—billions and billions of dollars that could be used in the war against Ukraine. That is a war started by a dictatorship against a democratic republic that we should be standing with.

We should be standing with the people of Ukraine, not enriching Russia to buy more weapons to attack them.

The taxpayers, they are certainly losers—\$40 billion of national treasure was the estimate given to us yesterday from the Secretary of Defense. And by all estimates, that doesn't include repairing all of the facilities damaged throughout the Middle East that the United States is involved in.

Before the war, the Strait of Hormuz was open. Now it is closed. That certainly doesn't benefit us or the world.

It has driven up the cost of gas; it has driven up the inflation rate. So Ameri-

cans, in addition to \$40 billion of their collective treasure, are paying out of their pocket so much more at the pump. The price in Oregon has been over \$5 a gallon.

Farmers, they have lost too. They were already hit hard by the tariffs, but now they are hit by the high diesel prices to operate their machinery and by the high cost of fertilizer, all of which could be envisioned if there had been a debate here over whether we should go to war with Iran.

We would have heard from the experts who would say: You understand the Strait of Hormuz is a very narrow channel, and Iran has cruise missiles that can proceed to hit ships in the strait, so they have cards to play. We would have debated that if we had had that debate and carried out our constitutional responsibility.

We would have observed that that would have a horrific impact on American families. We would have observed that it would have a terrible impact on American farmers. But we didn't observe that because we didn't hold the debate.

But, say you: Did we not hold oversight hearings at least? Not a single one—another failure of our constitutional responsibility. This group of Senators, through the committees, not a single oversight hearing of the war.

President Trump promised to lower prices and end wars, but he has raised prices, and he has started a war.

Trump posted on Truth Social:

From this point forward, any time the Islamic Republic of Iran shoots at a ship in the Strait of Hormuz . . . the United States will bomb and destroy ONE BRIDGE OR POWER PLANT, including those located next to, or in, the Capital City of Tehran.

From the beginning, President Trump thought the power to bomb was his ace up his sleeve. Is President Trump a strategic analyst of wars? No. He just had this instinct—his gut—saying: We have more bombs than they do, so they will fold.

But he was wrong. And through this campaign, he just keeps repeating the same thing: If they don't do what we want, we will bomb them even more.

We will bomb them even more—the echo time and time and time again.

In the beginning, Trump said this war was one we entered because Binyamin Netanyahu was going to bomb Iran anyway, and there would be retaliation so we might as well join the war with him. That was the justification for the United States going to war?

Eventually, he got around to saying: This is about the nuclear materials and making sure that they don't make a nuclear bomb. Our Director of National Intelligence had been very clear that Iran had never made a decision to build a bomb.

And the basic measures to prevent them from having a bomb—getting rid of their highly enriched uranium and moving it out of their country under international supervision; having the

IAEA—the International Atomic Energy Agency—monitor everything they do; dismantle their plutonium nuclear reactor—all those measures were already done by an international agreement supported by five major powers—Britain and France and China and Russia and the United States—all together, insisting that these measures were necessary to make sure Iran never got a bomb.

So they did all those things. They dismantled their nuclear reactor—their plutonium nuclear reactors called a rock reactor—and they proceeded to ship their highly enriched uranium out, and they let in all of the inspectors, and they followed all the rules of the centrifuges.

And who tore up that agreement and created a pathway for Iran to potentially covertly pursue a bomb? That man is President Trump.

So President Trump destroys the international agreement that prevents pursuit of a nuclear weapon and then proceeds to start a war to achieve the same result. And then he discovers the war doesn't work, so he has a 14-point plan.

Well, that plan kind of was jaw-dropping, particularly to my Republican colleagues. It called for America to organize an international Marshall Plan for Iran with some \$300-plus million of help. It called for immediate access for Iran to some \$24 billion of funds—after they had spent a decade complaining about Iran getting access to \$1.5 billion, under the previous agreement, of its own money. What is \$1.5 billion compared to the hundreds of billions of dollars that Trump was providing to Iran in the 14-point agreement?

Now we are hearing reports that homes have been hit, schools have been hit, hospitals have been hit. We are taking out bridges. The President is bragging about doing that. There was a report that two desalination plants have been hit in Iran. We don't have confirmation of it. I asked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff yesterday if indeed we had targeted or hit desalination plants. He said he didn't know but that he would get back to us. So I am looking forward to getting that information.

And why is that important? Because targeting a desalination plant is widely considered to be a war crime. So I hope those reports are wrong.

Why is it a war crime? Because destroying access to drinkable water—and one of these plants was reported to serve some 10,000 people in 20 villages—is considered unacceptable under international law. That is why it is a war crime—because it is not a strategic military objective, unless forcing people to have no access to water is a war strategy, which it is not.

I hope that report is wrong. I hope it is not the case that we targeted desalination plants. Iran is reported to have targeted a desalination plant as well.

So the war is potentially devolving here as we are hitting more and more

things that affect civilian life as well as having killed thousands of civilians directly. The laws of war prohibit attacks on objects indispensable to civilian survival, including water and food.

So where are we? Trump now claims the main mission of this war is to stop Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. But Iran's highly enriched uranium—that it only has because he tore up the agreement that prevented them from having that—is buried deep underground, so there is no easy way to extract it. If there is no easy way to extract it, how is this war supposed to solve that?

So the administration now believes negotiations are essential to be able to withdraw because there is no military answer. Maybe if we had had a debate here in Congress, we would have discussed the fact that there was no military strategy that would result in the extraction of that highly enriched uranium, that it would have to be done by agreement. So we are in the fifth month of Trump trying to bomb his way to an answer, the fifth month of that strategy failing.

Negotiators and facilitators of negotiators have proceeded to suggest a 10-day cease-fire to enable return to try to work out some of the details from that previous 14-point outline to solve this war. I support that effort because the path we are on is hurting America in every possible way and hurting a whole lot of civilians overseas.

So let's embrace and exercise our constitutional responsibility and pass Senator VAN HOLLEN's War Powers Resolution to end this reckless war of choice. If the President ignores it after we have passed it, then let's collectively insist on defending the role of the Senate and the House under our Constitution to be the place where the decisions are made about going to war. It is time that we honor our responsibility.

I know there are a lot of Members who don't want to have to have that debate because they are afraid they will get it wrong—they will make a vote for war and it will be a disaster or they will vote against war and their constituents will disagree. But shirking the responsibility is unacceptable. So strap your big-boy pants on and do the work we were elected under our Constitution to do.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

SUDAN

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, 3 years. For 3 years, the people of Sudan have lived through an unimaginable nightmare and hell: 3 years of the worst raging war on our planet, 3 years of displacement, 3 years of starvation, 3 years of children growing up surrounded by violence instead of possibility.

Perhaps what is most shocking is not only the horror that is unfolding in Sudan, it is how little of the world

seems to be paying attention. Twenty years ago, the horrors of Darfur captured the conscience of the international community. The world declared: Never again. Yet, today, another generation of Sudanese civilians is being terrorized while the world looks away.

Since April 2023, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces have waged an unimaginably brutal war for power. But it is not those fighting for power who have paid the ultimate price; it is ordinary people—mothers, fathers, children, families.

This war has become the world's worst humanitarian crisis, period. Entire communities have been cut off from food and medicine and lifesaving humanitarian assistance. Large parts of the country are experiencing severe food insecurity, with some areas facing outright famine and famine-like conditions. Women, children, families, journalists, aid workers—civilians of every kind have endured horrific violations of human rights and human dignity.

Consider what this war has done. More than 15 million people have been driven from their homes. More than 4 million have fled Sudan altogether. More than 30 million people now depend on humanitarian assistance simply to survive. Nearly 19 million children—roughly 90 percent of Sudan's school-age children—have lost access to formal education. Think about that. An entire generation is being robbed not only of their safety but of their future.

The United States has determined that the Rapid Support Forces have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. The Sudanese Armed Forces have also committed horrific war crimes. The Trump administration has maintained that the genocide determination against the RSF is correct. Two administrations. Two declarations of an ongoing genocide.

None of this, though, is inevitable. None of this war is inevitable. The war is continuing because outside actors continue to arm it, continue to finance it, and continue to sustain it. Every weapon that enters Sudan prolongs this crisis and the suffering of the Sudanese people.

Yet, despite the staggering scale of this crisis, the Trump administration terminated bilateral humanitarian assistance to Sudan. And despite the need for sustained American leadership, the Trump administration has still not appointed a Special Envoy for Sudan.

The people of Sudan deserve more than divided attention. They deserve more than the American public looking the other way. They deserve focused American leadership in this time of crisis.

Today, the warning lights are flashing all over the city of El Obeid. We have seen the crisis already when it comes to El Fasher and the horrors that existed there. But now we see the

pattern starting again in another major community. We know this pattern. First, roads are cut. Then humanitarian aid is blocked. Then electricity disappears. Then water disappears. Communications are shut down and disappear. Civilians are trapped. And then the killing begins.

Strategically located between Darfur and Khartoum, El Obeid has become the RSF's next major target. It is home to nearly 1 million people. They are at risk again. Most roads into and out of El Obeid have already been cut off. Only one major route remains, and it has already come under repeated drone attacks. Those attacks are growing more frequent and more destructive. Water systems, powerplants, telecommunications infrastructure, health facilities—the very infrastructure civilians depend on to survive is under assault.

We know this story, and we know how it ends. It is a call to the conscience of all of humanity and the conscience of this country. The only question now is, Will we act before history repeats itself in this city of 1 million people?

The head of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan warned:

The patterns we documented in El Fasher—including encirclement, attacks on civilian infrastructure, restrictions on humanitarian access, and widespread abuses against civilians—serve as a stark warning. The international community must heed these lessons and act to prevent further catastrophes.

The warning has been issued. The question is whether we will listen—because we know what happened in El Fasher. Families were hunted down house by house. Civilians were massacred at an unimaginable rate. Women were subjected to horrific sexual abuse. Children were caught between the shelling and the starvation. Thousands and thousands were killed. People who stayed were killed. People who tried to flee were killed.

And the tragedy is this: None of it came without a warning. The warning signs were there. The intelligence was there. The risk was known, but the urgency was not.

We cannot allow history to repeat itself in El Obeid, nor can we allow the violence consuming Sudan to continue simply because it has fallen from the world's headlines—fallen or never been in the U.S. headlines.

I traveled to the Chad-Sudan border. As this crisis raged, I went there to witness with my own eyes. I met humanitarian workers forced to make impossible choices because they simply did not have enough food, medicine, or resources for the overwhelming need before them. I met mothers carrying children who were obviously malnourished. I met families who had watched their loved ones be murdered. I met survivors of horrific sexual violence. I met people surviving on grass because there was simply nothing left to eat.

I saw what seemed like an ocean of humanity in desperation. Those images