

February 17, 2022

Dear Members of Congress,

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, urge you to publicly oppose a Foreign Terrorist Designation (FTO) of the Houthis in Yemen and communicate your opposition to the Biden administration.

While we agree that the Houthis share much blame, alongside the Saudi-led coalition, for horrific human rights violations in Yemen, an FTO designation does nothing to address these concerns. It would, however, prevent the delivery of commercial goods, remittances, and critical humanitarian assistance to millions of innocent people, greatly hurt the prospects for a negotiated settlement to the conflict, and further undermine U.S. national security interests in the region. Our coalition joins a chorus of growing opposition to the designation, including members of [Congress](#) and [multiple humanitarian](#) organizations operating on the ground in Yemen.

Rather than being a catalyst for peace, an FTO designation is a recipe for more conflict and famine, while unnecessarily further undermining U.S. diplomatic credibility. It is more likely that these designations will convince the Houthis that their goals cannot be achieved at the negotiating table. During his time as UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths [warned](#) the UN Security Council that U.S. designation would have a chilling effect on both humanitarian relief and diplomatic efforts. By designating only one party to the conflict as a terrorist group, while actively providing military assistance to the Saudi-led coalition, the designation would also further entangle the United States as a partisan and party to the war.

Even prior to discussions of a new FTO designation, the UN [warned](#) at the end of last year that the Yemeni people are more vulnerable than ever, as food prices doubled over the course of the year and the economy has been driven nearly to collapse by currency devaluation and hyperinflation. Designating the Houthis will further exacerbate and speed this suffering by disrupting the flow of much-needed commercial and humanitarian goods, including food, medicine, and aid delivery to the majority of Yemen's people. Some of the world's top humanitarian aid organizations working in Yemen warned in a joint [statement](#) this month that an FTO designation on the Houthis could "diminish the flow of humanitarian assistance at a time when organizations like ours are already struggling to keep pace with immense and growing needs."

Even without an FTO label, commercial shippers have been reluctant to import to Yemen given the high risk of delays, costs, and risks of violence. An FTO designation only increases this level of risk for commercial entities and further places the vital work of humanitarian and peacebuilders at risk. As a result, even if humanitarian exemptions are permitted, financial institutions, shipping firms, and insurance companies, along with aid organizations, are likely to find the risk of potential violations to be too high, resulting in these entities dramatically

scaling down or even ending their involvement in Yemen – a decision that would have indescribably severe human consequences.

According to [Oxfam](#), when the Trump administration briefly designated the Houthis as an FTO, they “saw exporters of vital commodities like food, medicine, and fuel all rush for the exits. It was clear to all that Yemen was heading toward economic freefall.”

We applaud past statements by Members of Congress to resist former-President Trump’s FTO label on the Houthis, as well as legislative efforts to [end](#) unauthorized U.S. support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen. Our organizations now urge you to publicly oppose a Foreign Terrorist Designation of the Houthis in Yemen. We also look forward to working with you on taking a new approach to U.S. policy in Yemen, as well as the broader Gulf region, – one that prioritizes human dignity and peace. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Action Corps  
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)  
Antiwar.com  
Avaaz  
Center for International Policy  
Charity & Security Network  
Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy  
Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)  
CODEPINK  
Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN)  
Demand Progress  
Environmentalist Against War  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Freedom Forward  
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)  
Health Alliance International  
Just Foreign Policy  
Justice for Muslims collective  
Justice Is Global  
MADRE  
National Council of Churches  
Neighbors for Peace  
National Iranian American Council (NIAC)  
Peace Action  
Physicians for social responsibility  
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft  
RootsAction.org  
Saferworld  
SolidarityINFOService  
The Episcopal Church  
The Libertarian Institute  
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR)  
Water4LifeMinistry.org  
Win Without War  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, US Section  
World BEYOND War  
Yemen Freedom Council  
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation  
Yemeni Alliance Committee