

Vetoing congressional resolution, Trump reaffirms US support for Saudi slaughter in Yemen

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President Donald Trump vetoed a congressional resolution Tuesday that would have required the United States to end direct military support for the Saudi-led slaughter in Yemen, which is now in its fifth year, with air strikes and other combat operations directly causing the deaths of some 80,000 people.

Trump's veto reaffirms his administration's support for the war that has resulted in one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, leaving 8 million people on the brink of famine and at least 85,000 children dead from starvation.

The war began in 2015 with the support of the Obama administration, which provided Saudi jets with midair refueling and established a joint planning center to provide Saudi forces with intelligence and approve military targets. The US has also provided Saudi Arabia with billions of dollars in jet fighters, bombs and other military equipment and training, which has been used to destroy homes, factories, hospitals, schools, markets and critical water and electrical infrastructure.

While seven Republicans in the Senate and 16 in the House joined the Democrats in voting in favor of ending US intervention in Yemen, proponents of the measure won't be able to pull together the two-thirds majority required to overturn Trump's veto.

The president's veto statement, delivered to the Senate, is a declaration of the absolute authority of the president to wage war directly and via proxies without the fig-leaf of congressional approval or oversight. "This resolution is an unnecessary, dangerous attempt to weaken my constitutional authorities, endangering the lives of American citizens and brave service members, both today and in the future," Trump wrote.

The resolution was opposed by Secretary of State

Mike Pompeo and Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, who insist that the war is necessary to counter Iran, which Washington has claimed, without evidence, is arming the Houthi rebels who overthrew the US and Saudi puppet regime of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi in 2014.

Absurdly, Trump's veto statement declares that the resolution is irrelevant since the US is not actually involved in hostilities against Yemen, as there are no American soldiers inside the country who are directing, assisting or participating in attacks on the Houthi forces.

While the bipartisan resolution invoked the War Powers Act of 1973, which requires Congressional approval for US military action, it was presented as a symbolic rebuke of Trump's refusal to denounce Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman over his role in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi embassy in Istanbul last year. Notably, the bill contained a proviso which would have allowed the Trump administration to continue waging war in Yemen under the cover of the war against Al Qaeda and "associated forces." The US has been carrying out its own secret war in Yemen with drone strikes and special operations forces since 2002.

Many of the Republicans and Democrats who voted for the War Powers resolution on Yemen did so knowing that it had no chance of being enacted. The White House announced in November of last year after the passage of similar measures in the Senate that Trump would veto the measure if it passed in the House. It was clear at that point that there were not enough votes in Congress to override the veto.

Rather than a genuine effort to end the war in Yemen,

the bill, introduced in the Senate by nominally independent Senator Bernie Sanders, who is running for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, was seen as an opportunity to make an empty appeal to broad anti-war sentiment among the American population.

A YouGov poll published at the end of last year found that a strong majority of Americans, 75 percent, oppose US support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. The same poll found that 82 percent of Americans want Congress to end or limit missile sales to Saudi Arabia. A majority of those identified as both liberal (98 percent) and conservative (63 percent) oppose the war.

In addition to Sanders, the other senators running for the 2020 Democratic nomination who signed on as co-sponsors of the bill included Cory Booker, Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand, Kamala Harris and Amy Klobuchar. If elected president, each of them would continue to arm the bloody monarchs in Saudi Arabia and utilize the broad unilateral war powers claimed by Trump.

While this cynical political theater has played out in Washington, DC, the criminal Saudi slaughter in Yemen has continued unabated.

A Saudi air strike hit a school in the capital Sanaa on April 7, killing 13 civilians and wounding 100 others. Seven of those killed were young female students. “Everyone was hysterical, some were crying and shouting in panic,” Fatehiya Kahlani, principal of the Al Raei school told Al Jazeera. “The situation was horrible as the school population is 2,100. Some girl students were killed and others were wounded and are in a hospital as a result of the missile strike. The school building was destroyed too.”

“We suddenly heard a fighter jet while we were at school. We then heard the first strike. We remained calm. Then came the second strike and then the third, which was the strongest of them all,” Ali Ahmed, a student wounded in the airstrike explained to Al Jazeera. “The building was damaged and we were injured by broken glass. As the fourth air strike came in, we panicked and ran home.”

The attack came less than two weeks after an air strike on a hospital in a rural area outside Saadah in March that killed eight, including five children, and destroyed critical medical supplies and equipment.

In addition to supporting this slaughter, the US has continued to carry out its own air war in Yemen under a shroud of secrecy. The US military recently admitted that it carried out six separate drone strikes in the last week of March against alleged Al Qaeda and ISIS targets in Al Bayda Governorate. No figures have been released on the number of those killed or wounded in these attacks. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates that nearly 1,400 people, including dozens of children, have been killed by US air strikes in Yemen since 2002.



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