



November 13, 2017

The Right Honourable Boris Johnson,
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Dear Foreign Secretary Johnson,

We are writing to you with an urgent request regarding the fast deteriorating situation in Yemen. As a member of the Quint grouping on Yemen and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the United Kingdom bears a special responsibility to use all diplomatic means to end ongoing violations against civilians in Yemen and the recent blockade of the country, to obtain concrete commitments by all sides for unfettered humanitarian access, and to secure a ceasefire and resumption of the peace process. The breakdown in Yemen of respect for international law and the rapidly worsening humanitarian situation puts millions of civilian lives at risk, and threatens not only regional stability but also international peace and security more broadly.

Yemen is now the largest humanitarian crisis in the world, the man-made result of almost 1,000 days of war. As documented by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the war in Yemen has been marked by flagrant and repeated violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties, including airstrikes, shelling, and other attacks on civilians, as well as unlawful restrictions on humanitarian access. We unequivocally condemn these violations by all sides, and echo the UN condemnation of the recent airstrike on a Sa'ada market, and the missile launch targeting Riyadh's civilian airport.

The recent decision by the Saudi Arabia- and United Arab Emirates-led coalition to temporarily close all of Yemen's land, sea, and air entry points is deeply worrying, coming as it does on top of this already-dire humanitarian situation. This blockade already has grounded UN flights, prevented humanitarian workers from flying in and out of the country, and barred ships already in port from off-loading lifesaving food, fuel, and medical supplies bound for afflicted civilians, including children. Yemen relies on imports for vital food and fuel supplies, with four-fifths of Yemen's population in need of humanitarian aid, including 7 million at imminent risk of famine. As the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock stated, unless this blockade is completely lifted, Yemen will suffer "the largest famine the world has seen for decades, with millions of victims." The United Kingdom cannot allow this to happen.

The UN Security Council's 15 June Presidential Statement called on all parties "to allow the safe, rapid, unhindered access for humanitarian supplies and personnel," and to take steps to improve humanitarian and commercial access via ports and airports, including the timely installation of US-financed cranes into Hudaydah port and increased access via Sana'a airport. Five months on, obstruction of humanitarian aid and critical supplies has worsened rather than improved. All parties continue to arbitrarily obstruct the access for humanitarian workers and supplies; Saudi Arabia and the UAE have refused to permit the installation of the cranes destined for Hudaydah; and Sana'a airport remains closed to commercial flights. These longstanding restrictions on

commercial shipping and aid deliveries have already significantly exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Yemen; a complete blockade could tip the country over the edge.

The Quint's legitimacy depends on compliance by its members with the most basic tenets of the laws of war. The United Kingdom also must recognize that the current framework for peace talks, most recently set out in UN Security Council resolution 2216, has failed to bring the parties to the table, and a new framework for peace is long overdue given the protracted nature of the conflict and the urgency of the humanitarian crisis.

We urge the United Kingdom to use the upcoming Quint meeting in London to make clear that the status quo in Yemen cannot be allowed to continue, by:

- Obtaining agreement from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and their allies to immediately end the blockade of Yemen's land, sea, and air points of entry;
- Securing concrete commitments by all parties to the conflict to allow rapid and unhindered access into and throughout Yemen for humanitarian supplies and personnel, and essential imports of food, fuel, and medical supplies; and
- Condemning all attacks on civilians by all parties, demanding an urgent ceasefire by all parties to the conflict, and generating genuine commitments by Quint members Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to respect international humanitarian law and end deliberate or indiscriminate attacks on civilians; and
- Setting forth a Quint-supported plan to reinvigorate peace talks and end unlawful attacks on civilians, through a realistic and concrete roadmap to peace.

After nearly 1,000 days of conflict, the United Kingdom must use the upcoming Quint meeting to both prevent a catastrophic worsening of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and avoid the serious risk that continued conflict in Yemen will lead to regional destabilization and increased threats to international peace and security.

Signed:

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| 1. Action Against Hunger | 11. Physicians for Human Rights |
| 2. Action on Armed Violence | 12. Refugees International |
| 3. American Friends Service Committee | 13. Saferworld |
| 4. CARE | 14. STAND: The Student-Led Movement to
End Mass Atrocities |
| 5. Center for Civilians in Conflict | 15. Tearfund |
| 6. Human Rights First | 16. War Child UK |
| 7. International Rescue Committee | 17. Win Without War |
| 8. Mwatana Organization For Human Rights | 18. Yemen Peace Project |
| 9. Norwegian Refugee Council | |
| 10. Oxfam | |

Copied to:

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Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Defence

For more information, please contact:

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