

December 14, 2017

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

I write to thank you for your strong statement on December 6 regarding the need for Saudi Arabia to immediately end its starvation blockade in Yemen that has helped create the world's largest food insecurity crisis. I share your conviction that the severity of Yemen's humanitarian crisis makes clear that Riyadh must take specific actions immediately to stop impeding the delivery of food, fuel, and medicine to the world's most vulnerable individuals. Saudi Arabia's actions and your statement trigger a statutory prohibition on U.S. assistance to Saudi Arabia, and I request an update on the administration's implementation of that prohibition.

While both sides of the armed conflict in Yemen have engaged in unacceptable practices that have increased the suffering of the Yemeni people, Saudi actions have been particularly reprehensible. As was highlighted in a hearing I convened in July, Saudi Arabia has systematically impeded the flow of humanitarian assistance into Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition has delayed and diverted ships carrying life-saving assistance, bombed cranes critical to its delivery, refused to permit the installation of U.S.-funded replacement cranes, bombed a World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse, and prevented journalists and humanitarian personnel from traveling to Yemen. Saudi Arabia's refusal to permit the WFP cranes to the port of Hodeidah is particularly reprehensible because the U.S. taxpayer-funded cranes purchased for that purpose would roughly double or triple the throughput of Yemen's most important port for humanitarian relief. That's why the WFP sent a letter to Saudi Arabia on June 27 asking for permission to deliver the cranes to Hodeidah.

As a consequence of the war and impediments to humanitarian aid, Yemen is experiencing the world's largest food insecurity crisis. According to a report published on December 4, 2017, by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "17.8 million people in Yemen are food insecure. Out of this, approximately 8.4 million people are severely food insecure and at risk of starvation - a worrying increase of 24 percent."

The Saudis have responded to growing international concern by emphasizing Iran's activities in Yemen, understandably upset about the missile launched toward Riyadh. However, here's the reality that Riyadh must recognize: The worsening humanitarian crisis caused by Saudi Arabia's actions are transforming noncombatants in Yemen into life-long enemies of Riyadh and the United States—providing opportunities for Iran that it will use to further undermine Saudi and U.S. security and economic interests, destabilize the region, and advance Tehran's malign activities.

The Saudis have a right to defend themselves, but they have no right—morally or legally – to deliberately starve millions of people. Suggesting that we must choose between defeating Iran's efforts in Yemen and permitting unimpeded humanitarian access is a false choice—as self-defeating

and short-sighted as it is immoral. Working with the United States and the international community, the Saudi-coalition can oppose Iran's shipment of weapons into Yemen while ensuring full and unimpeded humanitarian access.

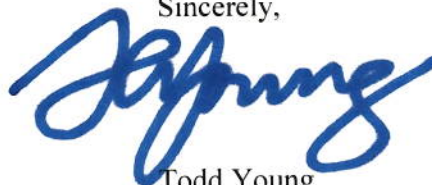
The ultimate solution to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is a diplomatic solution and an end to the war. In the meantime, each day that Saudi Arabia's starvation blockade continues undermines America's interests and causes countless preventable deaths.

For these reasons, I was pleased to see your strong and important statement on December 6. You said, "I have directed officials in my Administration to call the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to request that they completely allow food, fuel, water, and medicine to reach the Yemeni people who desperately need it. This must be done for humanitarian reasons immediately." I applaud your statement, which I believe is consistent with the best traditions of American international leadership, strength, and moral clarity.

Your statement was also important because it triggers a legal prohibition on assistance to Saudi Arabia. As you know, *22 U.S. Code §2378-1(a)* says, "No assistance shall be furnished under this chapter or the Arms Export Control Act [*22 U.S.C. 2751 et seq.*] to any country when it is made known to the President that the government of such country prohibits or otherwise restricts, directly or indirectly, the transport or delivery of United States humanitarian assistance." Based on your recognition that Saudi Arabia has at least restricted indirectly the transport or delivery of U.S. humanitarian assistance, I respectfully request that your administration provide an update to my office on its plan to implement the prohibition on assistance to Saudi Arabia that *22 U.S. Code §2378-1(a)* requires.

Thank you again for your strong statement condemning Saudi Arabia's starvation blockade in Yemen. Saudi Arabia's impediments to humanitarian assistance in Yemen violate international law, humanitarian principles, and U.S. law, and are inconsistent with U.S. national security interests. I look forward to working with you and your administration to implement the assistance prohibition that *22 U.S. Code §2378-1(a)* requires. In addition, if Saudi Arabia continues to be unresponsive to your December 6 demands—failing to permit the delivery of the U.S. taxpayer funded cranes to Yemen's most important humanitarian port and continuing to block the delivery of commercial fuel shipments—I stand ready to work with you and your administration to take legislative action.

Sincerely,



Todd Young
U.S. Senator

CC:

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis

U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Mark Green