



Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

August 2, 2017

Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster
National Security Advisor
National Security Council
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear General McMaster,

Among the many pressing concerns of the Arabian Peninsula, the current humanitarian crisis in Yemen is particularly severe and in need of immediate action. The ongoing armed conflict has led to the deaths of 10,000 citizens, while an additional three million have been displaced. A cholera outbreak has infected over 300,000, and aid organizations predict this number to rise to 600,000 in the near future. Ten million people require life-saving food aid due to famine conditions, and 17 million, or sixty percent of the country's population, are food insecure. The children of Yemen are disproportionately experiencing the disastrous effects of famine, resulting in malnutrition and stunting.

While the United States has been generous in funding emergency relief to Yemen, the food, water, and medical supplies that are desperately needed by the people are currently bottlenecked in the Port of Hoideidah, a critical access point for at least 80% of Yemen's food supplies.

Both Saudi-led coalition forces and Houthi-Saleh forces have destroyed or damaged the infrastructure needed for transporting life-saving aid and food to civilians. The Saudi coalition, while battling Houthi rebels and Al Qaeda, destroyed multiple cranes that allowed for an effective flow of food through the Port of Hoideidah. Additionally, the coalition has prevented replacement cranes, purchased with funds from USAID, from entering the port despite reports from humanitarian organizations within the country that the port is safe for aid-related deliveries.

Given the strong relationship the Administration has developed with the Saudi Arabian government, I strongly encourage personal advocacy for the safe, efficient passage of food and medical supplies into Yemen to alleviate famine and further loss of life due to starvation and disease. While the replacement cranes will not be a complete solution to the crisis, they will save lives, lower regional pressures, and allow for a more comprehensive response to suffering Yemenis.

Last year in response to violence in Yemen, Pope Francis prayed that "this pointless slaughter will awaken consciences, lead to a change of heart, and inspire all parties to lay down their arms and take up the path of dialogue." I echo his call. The United States should work with regional and international partners to bring a peaceful end to Yemen's civil war and provide humanitarian relief to counter the desperation that feeds extremism. Opening the Port of Hoideidah is an immediate step in this direction.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú
Bishop of Las Cruces
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace