

### **\*C-Span audio\***

That was audio from C-Span's Thursday coverage of the House of Representatives vote on Senate Joint Resolution 7, which seeks to end US military involvement in Yemen. The Resolution's passage in both houses marks an exceedingly rare Congressional invocation of the 1973 War Powers act, which limits the President's ability to unilaterally initiate military action. It is also a strong rebuke of President Trump's support for the Saudi government, especially in the aftermath of the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a Washington Post journalist and Saudi dissident.

The bipartisan resolution is part of a larger wave of opposition that has been long growing to US involvement in the Yemeni Civil war, which has been waging since 2014. Although the primary conflict is ostensibly between the Houthi Rebels in the North and the government of Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi in the south, the civil war quickly became internationalized as Saudi Arabia and eight other states in the region began conducting regular airstrikes to support the Hadi government. It's believed that the Saudi Coalition were quick to support the Hadi government due to their belief that Iran was backing the northern Houthis in an attempt to spread their influence in Yemen, which borders Saudi Arabia. For their part, Iranian officials deny any involvement in the conflict. As noted by Washington Post journalist Thomas Juneau, it does appear that the Iranian military *actually* is providing a limited amount of training and weaponry to Houthi forces, but the amount is so marginal it would be inaccurate to claim that Iran holds a significant sway over Houthi decision-making.

After over four years of conflict, Yemen has become one of the world's greatest human crises. Since March 2015, the UN estimates that around 7 thousand civilians have been killed and 11 thousand more injured in the fighting—these numbers are, by their own admission, incomplete. A spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Rupert Colville, told journalists that those numbers were incomplete because they only included independently verified deaths, which excludes difficult-to-reach areas and unreported casualties. Roughly 65% of these civilian fatalities have been attributed to Saudi-led airstrikes.

Additionally, 24 million Yemeni people, about 24% of the population, now require humanitarian assistance; 14.3 million of them are deemed to have "acute" needs by the UN. In a report delivered to the UN Security Council, UN emergency relief chief Mark Lowcock noted that over 10 million people were, quote, just a step away from famine unquote. Over two-thirds of the country do not have access to adequate healthcare and, and a similar amount do not have access to clean or and sanitation. Cholera and diphtheria have ravaged the country, with over

145 thousand suspected cases of Cholera reported this year along. Although this is not as bad as 2017, which was numerically the worst cholera outbreak in recorded history, the number of people contracting the disease is quickly climbing.

All of these factors are being severely exacerbated by periodic Saudi blockades and Hadi government policies—often influenced by Saudi pressure—which have severely restricted imports of food and medicine into a country already on the brink of famine. A 2018 report authored by Martha Mundy, a Professor Emeritus at the London School of Economics, analyzed patterns of coalition bombardment and came to the conclusion that there is strong evidence that the Saudi-led coalition is intentionally targeting networks of food production and distribution.

In the face of all this, one Yemeni doctor, Mekkia Madhi, mused to Declan Walsh of the New York Times, quote “We’re surprised the Khashoggi case is getting so much attention while millions of Yemeni children are suffering. No one gives a damn about them.”

As unfortunate as it might be, it does appear that the Saudi assassination of Khashoggi did what the suffering of 20 million Yemeni people could not: galvanize Congress into action, if only to limit US involvement in the war. At least two similar measures opposing US involvement and arms sale have been introduced in the Senate, though both were soundly defeated. In 2016, a Resolution introduced by Senator Rand Paul from Kentucky and Senator Chris Murphy from Connecticut to halt a 1.16 billion dollar arms sale to Saudi Arabia was defeated 71 to 27. Three years later, Senate Joint Resolution 7 passed with 54 in favor and 46 against. This measure, notably, does not address the issues of arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

The text of the current measure will now be heading to President Trump’s desk, who is expected to veto the resolution due to his long-standing support for Saudi involvement in Yemen.

Perhaps anticipating this, nine lawmakers, including Representative Ro Khanna from California, Senator Bernie Sanders from Vermont, Senator Rand Paul from Kentucky, and Representative Matt Gaetz from Florida wrote President Trump a letter urging him not to veto the bill. In it, they note that the Resolution would take action on previous Trump administration directives and decisions, including requesting that Saudi Arabia cease its air-land-sea blockade that prevents medical and food supplies from entering Yemen, as well as ending military support for the Saudi military in Yemen. Previously, the US has been providing refueling operations for Saudi-led airstrikes as well as targeting assistance.

Even if it is ultimately vetoed, the resolution’s passage in both houses of congress is a victory for its longtime proponents. This victory has come almost immediately on the tail of its

defeat: a similar resolution passed the House last December. But, while in the Senate, Republican added an amendment which condemned anti-Semitism, a seemingly inoffensive provision which Democrats voted in favor of adding. The amendment, however, turned out to have been added in bad faith: because it was not directly relevant to the core of the resolution, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell invoked procedural roles to block the Senate vote.

In the most recent attempt to pass the measure, House Republicans attempted a similar tactic by introducing an amendment against the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. This time Democrats voted against the amendment.

With the measure heading to the White House, the ball is now firmly in the President's court. It is sure to continue soon. And we should also keep the Yemeni people firmly in our mind, for whom the story is much more than just news.

I'm Cameron Lallana and this has been International News. The music used in our report this week was Martian Landscape by Breakmaster Cylinder. The news never sleeps and, frankly, neither do we. We'll be back next week.