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# Built-in U.S. war drive fuels genocide in Yemen

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Remains of school bus destroyed by a U.S.-supplied bomb in August 2018. Forty Yemeni children were killed.

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen demands, as a first step, the unconditional withdrawal of U.S. weapons and military aid — not excuses to justify remaining a

partner in genocide.

It doesn't matter whether Washington calls its own political structure a democracy and another country a dictatorship or failed state. These are words used by the powers-that-be to vilify their targets and ease public acceptance of imperialist war.

What actually matters is the fact that a much more powerful imperialist country is terrorizing a sovereign nation for the ultimate purpose of profit.

As V.I. Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, wrote when analysing World War 1: "The struggle for markets and for plundering foreign lands, the eagerness to head off the revolutionary movement of the proletariat and to crush democracy within each country, the urge to deceive, divide, and crush the proletarians of all countries, to incite the wage slaves of one nation against the wage slaves of another nation for the profits of the bourgeoisie — that is the only real content and meaning of the war." (The Tasks of Revolutionary Social-Democracy in the European War, August 1914)

We hear both Republican and Democratic Party politicians — even some who call themselves socialists — pushing for wars in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan, or whipping up fear against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea). Yemen is also one of their targets.

For years, Saudi Arabia has been violating the sovereignty of the people of Yemen in their fight against U.S. and Saudi domination. The movement of resistance, Ansar Allah (called Houthi rebels in the U.S. media), at one point successfully overthrew a government tied to Saudi Arabia and the U.S. It was then met with attacks from both al-Qaida and the coalition forces of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

Here's how a [CBS news report from Nov. 28](#) described the situation: "With weapons supplied by the U.S., Saudi Arabia is capable of much greater damage. The Saudi-led

coalition has hit weddings, markets and schools with airstrikes, according to a U.N. report, and aid groups say a Saudi blockade has contributed to a deadly cholera outbreak, leaving thousands dead. There are as many as 14 million people at risk of starvation in Yemen."

[A Nov. 20 report by Save the Children](#), citing United Nations data, states that some 85,000 children under age 5 may have died from extreme hunger or disease since the war in Yemen escalated. According to the charity, this is a conservative estimate of the effects of severe acute malnutrition between April 2015 and October 2018.

According to the report: "Almost four years since the brutal conflict in Yemen escalated, the U.N. says that up to 14 million people are at risk of famine. That number has increased dramatically since the Saudi and Emirati-led coalition imposed a month-long blockade of Yemen just over a year ago."

That blockade couldn't happen without U.S. assistance.

### **Loophole to continue war**

Concessions to the ruling class by politicians, which allow repression and economic war to be waged against workers here on a daily basis, also pave the way for murder against our fellow workers abroad. The road to Trump's anti-migrant policies and war in Yemen were paved by the Obama administration's record number of deportations and extension of drone wars over Africa and Yemen.

On Nov. 28, Sen. Bernie Sanders forced a Senate vote that allowed debate on his bill, SJR 54, resulting in its approval on Dec. 13. The bill is supposedly meant to end U.S. support for the war against Yemen, and its victory has been lauded by many well-meaning progressives, who may not have looked under the hood before they bought what Sanders was selling. Some suspicion was warranted given Sanders' contradictory international record, including his backward stance on Venezuela and

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Some of that past support for U.S. wars, in fact, helped pave the way for the humanitarian crisis we are witnessing today in Yemen. This speaks to the influence of the military-industrial complex even on politicians who have a more progressive domestic agenda.

According to an April 1, 2016, article by Alexander Cohen in Politico, entitled ["The Defense Industry's Surprising 2016 Favorites: Bernie & Hillary"](#):

"Despite advocating steep cuts in defense spending, Sanders' campaign has accepted at least \$310,055 from defense-related workers — more than any Republican presidential candidate — since the start of the 2016 campaign cycle."

This may explain why the recent bill by Sanders, although presented as a measure to stop Washington's involvement in Yemen, would actually justify further atrocities by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, in addition to allowing two huge loopholes to continue war cooperation with Saudi Arabia.

One of these loopholes caused even the American Civil Liberties Union to reject a similar bill, primarily authored by Democrat Ro Khanna, to stop U.S. assistance to Saudi Arabia in Yemen.

That bill stalled due to a technicality introduced by Republicans on Nov. 14. [In a Nov. 18 article on the ACLU website](#), Hina Shamsi, director of the group's National Security Project, explained why they had urged Congress members to vote "No" on that very similar bill.

Shamsi writes: "Critically, the legislation wouldn't actually end U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition. That's because it requires an end to U.S. support for Saudi 'hostilities,' but it doesn't specifically define the hostilities that Congress is prohibiting. To understand why that's a problem, you have to know a bit of recent

history — going back to the Obama administration, when U.S. support began.”

## **Democrats blazed trail for Trump**

Shamsi goes on to explain that to justify the war in Libya, Obama changed the definition of “hostilities” in order to allow unchecked use of airstrikes, setting a dangerous precedent — as legal scholars warned at the time. And, Trump is now taking advantage of that precedent.

Shamsi also explains how the legislation “gives a pass” to current U.S. assassinations in Yemen, allowing the Trump administration to put a formal legal stamp on murder. “That’s because the Yemen resolution contains an exception stating that it doesn’t apply to the United States’ own use of force in Yemen if those activities are authorized by the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF),” states Shamsi. “That law authorized only the war in Afghanistan, but three administrations have improperly relied on it for military actions around the world.

“We have long fought against the government’s untenable arguments about where and how the AUMF applies — arguments the government has made to justify everything from deadly drone strikes in Yemen to unlawful detention of a U.S. citizen captured in Syria. Courts have largely been reluctant to adjudicate these claims, even in cases of the worst American human rights abuses. And the Trump administration knows that,” Shamsi explained. ...

“As The Associated Press reported just last week, this administration has dramatically expanded the number of lethal U.S. strikes in Yemen, and at least a third of those killed so far in 2018 were civilians. ... There’s another related mistake here. The Trump administration would also likely read this exception to justify its support for the United Arab Emirate’s devastating actions in Yemen, so long as they are purportedly taken against al-Qaida under the AUMF Umbrella.”

Although the Sanders bill does not name the AUMF waiver, it emphatically states that engagement and assistance to Saudi forces is justified as long as the claim of al-Qaida involvement is made by either country. And, as history has shown time and again, the actual presence or nonpresence of al-Qaida is irrelevant to the claims made by the U.S.

But, that's just the first major loophole. The second is even bigger. When the bill was presented on Dec. 13, [it also allowed an amendment](#) that reads: "As Modified; To provide that nothing in the joint resolution shall be construed to influence or disrupt any military operations and cooperation with Israel."

Meaning, this bill says nothing at all. Why? Because if "military operations" does not refer to "and cooperation with Israel," then anything goes and this bill has no effect. If the clause "military operations" is part of "and cooperation with Israel," meaning it refers only to allied war moves with Israel, then all that U.S.-armed Israel has to do is say that it's part of the coalition in Yemen and, again, the bill has absolutely no effect. The intentionally vague language allows the bill to be read either way.

Even the one thing this bill is clear on, not allowing the U.S. to fuel Saudi aircraft, is contradicted by that amendment. In any case, the Saudis are now fueling their own aircraft. In fact, as [reported in the Financial Times on Nov. 10](#), the Saudis themselves asked for this: "Riyadh said that it requested the cessation as it had increased its 'capability to independently conduct in-flight refuelling in Yemen.'"

Just as pertinent is the fact that, as the [Associated Press reported on Aug. 6](#), al-Qaida, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. have been working together against the Ansar Allah forces, which are actually fighting al-Qaida. That association between the Saudis, the U.S. and al-Qaida, again, makes this bill useless, since wherever the U.S. is fighting in Yemen, as in the U.S. war against Syria, al-Qaida forces are close by, and sometimes in collaboration.

## **Sanders and the war on Libya**

Former President Obama wasn't the only Democratic Party candidate whose actions directly affected the pace and direction of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, with his justification for the 2011 war against Libya being used today. Regime change in Libya was also endorsed by Bernie Sanders.

In addition, Trump's nomination of James Mattis, earlier appointed by President Obama as head of Central Command, for secretary of defense, was supported by most Democrats, and Sanders. This despite the fact that Mattis was responsible for multiple war crimes against the people of Iraq, including the siege of Fallujah. There, the Pentagon targeted civilians and children with white phosphorus — a substance that self-ignites and melts skin immediately on contact — a horrific weapon whose use on civilians violates international law.

[On Sept. 19, 2016, the Washington Post admitted](#) it was likely the U.S. gave white phosphorus weapons to Saudi Arabia to use in Yemen. That Sanders' bill would basically do nothing to stop the use of these types of weapons against the children of Yemen speaks volumes about the complicity of the Democrats and their supporters, whose talents mostly center on quieting dissent against U.S. war crimes.

Although the money going to Democratic, pro-Democratic and Republican politicians explains their support of U.S. wars, it doesn't explain why the ruling class, the financial and industrial monopolists who run this country, pay to maintain these wars in the first place. But their profit motive and billions of dollars in arms sales to the Saudi alliance does.

Even after Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed in the Saudi Arabian Consulate in Istanbul last October by direct order of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, according to the CIA, Trump refused to threaten relations with the Saudi family for the benefit of arms manufacturers like Lockheed Martin.

Lockheed made the bomb that Saudis dropped on a school bus in Yemen, killing 40 children in August. ([Guardian, Aug. 19](#))

By the way, Sanders was the sixth-largest recipient of affiliated aid from Lockheed Martin in his 2016 electoral campaign, [according to OpenSecrets.org](#).

## **Quelling people's anger**

After the revelations came out last year about mass starvation resulting from the U.S.-assisted war in Yemen, and especially after Khashoggi's murder, when people began to respond with anger and shock, a way of appeasing that anger had to be manufactured. Not with a bill that would actually stop U.S. assistance vital to the Saudi war against Yemen — but with one that could calm the opposition while continuing to block self-determination for the people of Yemen, which would likely threaten U.S. profits.

As Lenin explained in his scientific analysis of capitalism's final, imperialist stage, the constant acquisition of land, resources and increased exploitation of labor is required to fend off a continual decline or decay in its ability to maintain ruling-class profits. This requires more war and denying the working class even more of the wealth created through its labor.

Taking basic social services away from workers is a direct consequence of the trillions of dollars necessary to prosecute imperialist wars. Dollars denied to our communities, and the wars that steal the wealth of workers abroad, lead to more police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement brutality here at home, to keep the people in fear so they won't demand the wealth that they created.

And as the economy worsens and recessions take longer and longer to recover from, so-called progressive politicians, even those who call themselves socialist, increasingly seek to quell the people's anger. They aim to limit reforms to window

dressing that does nothing to better the condition of the working class in the long run, here or abroad.

Instead of being satisfied with whatever piece of legislative rotten meat is thrown our way, let's come together and make our own solutions. Let's work on shutting this system down and demanding that not one more child die in criminal wars for profit.

