



[International Aid Groups Warn That the Terror Designation Against the Houthis Could Worsen the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen](#)

In a move announced this week, the Trump administration designated Yemen's Houthi movement as a terrorist organization, which aid groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have warned could seriously exacerbate the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo notified Congress of the State Department's decision in the dead of night on Sunday, January 10th during his last days in office, sparking legitimate concern and anger from lawmakers in both political parties regarding how it will negatively impact an already bleak humanitarian situation. Houthi rebels are in de facto control of up to 70% of Yemen in opposition to an exiled government that is backed by the regimes in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The Houthis have control over the activities of international financial institutions, aid organizations, and NGOs in Yemen, all of which provide desperately needed humanitarian assistance. The designation of the Houthis as a terror group could jeopardize the aid being provided there, as international organizations would expose themselves to legal risk by working with them under the new classification.

International bodies such as the United Nations have indicated that the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is currently the greatest such catastrophe on the planet, and that urgent steps must be taken to address the situation. Up to 90% of all the food in Yemen is imported, and up to half of the Yemeni population is at risk of famine. The Houthis have coordinated with international aid organizations to secure humanitarian assistance and the group acts as the de facto government in Yemen, giving it the power to distribute the resources. However, by designating the Houthis as terrorists, the Trump administration is imposing unnecessary and difficult bureaucratic and legal barriers on international organizations attempting to coordinate with them.

While the Houthis work to secure humanitarian aid for Yemen's population, the group has been accused of war crimes, corruption, and other serious offenses which have complicated and further increased the difficulty for aid groups attempting to work there. Despite this, the United Nations remains committed to working with the Houthis to deliver aid to Yemen, with a spokeswoman decrying the United States' new designation of the group.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo seemingly made the decision to designate the Houthis as a terrorist organization as one last favor to the Saudi government before he exits office. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates support the Yemeni government in exile in Saudi Arabia, and have been fighting a bloody and illegal war in Yemen since the Houthis came to power. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has been caused by the brutal war waged by the Saudis and Emiratis. Both Gulf nations view the Houthis as Iranian proxies, despite the lack of a clear connection between the two. Pompeo views the terrorist designation as a way to weaken the Houthis' ability to control Yemen, which would subsequently aid the capacity of the Yemeni government in exile. However, experts have warned that the terrorist designation will prolong the conflict by hurting the possibility for future peace negotiations.