



President Biden Ends Military Aid for the Saudi-Led War in Yemen and Reverses the Previous Administration's Houthi Terror Designation

President Biden officially announced in recent days that he would be ending U.S. support for the Saudi Arabian-led offensive in Yemen. This move came in the aftermath of his decision to reverse the previous Trump administration's terrorist designation against Yemen's Houthis for humanitarian reasons. Over 110,000 people have died in the ongoing Yemeni conflict, and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have played a key role in the loss of life through an indiscriminate bombing campaign. Successive American administrations under Presidents Obama and Trump actively supported the offensive against Yemen by supplying Saudi Arabia and the UAE with weapons. Now, President Biden has reversed these policies, and is working toward a diplomatic solution to end the conflict. Biden called the war in Yemen a "humanitarian catastrophe" and pledged to work with the relevant parties to bring the conflict to an end.

The war in Yemen began in 2014 when the country's Houthi minority stormed the capital and took over much of the country. Yemen's government then fled to Saudi Arabia where it existed in exile, although the Houthis were in de facto control of the country. Saudi Arabia and the UAE then initiated a bloody aerial offensive to try and drive out the rebels, but they underestimated the Houthis' resolve. Saudi Arabia believed the war would be over quickly after it intervened, but this was a serious miscalculation as they remain stuck in the quagmire in Yemen some six years on. President Biden's decision to end U.S. support for the war by cutting off arms sales to Riyadh has been seen by experts as sending a message to Saudi Arabia to end their involvement in the conflict.

The United Nations has called the situation in Yemen the worst humanitarian catastrophe in the world. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have indiscriminately bombed civilian targets, including schools, hospitals, and weddings using American-made armaments, which led to an outcry over U.S. support for their offensive. However, successive American administrations have refused to condemn the flagrant human rights violations committed by their Gulf allies in Yemen, and have increased arms sales to them. Additionally, punitive economic measures imposed by Saudi Arabia, combined with a severe drought, has pushed much of Yemen toward famine. The United Nations estimates that roughly a quarter of Yemen's population is food insecure, which could increase to half of the population if urgent steps are not taken.

One step that President Biden took to immediately address the humanitarian situation in Yemen was the delisting of the Houthis as a terrorist entity. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had designated the Houthis as a terrorist organization on one of his final days in office at the behest of Saudi Arabia. However, this designation would prevent international organizations from working with the Houthis to deliver humanitarian aid to Yemen. President Biden's decision on this matter generated praise from legislators and human rights organizations, who largely agreed that the order would save lives in Yemen. Biden also nominated the first American envoy for Yemen since the war began six years ago, a move that has been welcomed by diplomats and observers who view it as the first step toward the United States taking an active role in mediating a peace agreement.