

July 14, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, and Whip Clyburn,

With the House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair expected to be vacant for the 117th Congress, we write, as organizations representing millions of people from every corner of this country, to express our demand that the Democratic Caucus elect a chair who will lead the committee in advancing a vision of restraint and progressive realism in U.S. foreign policy.

For years, there has been a disconnect between HFAC and the rest of the House Democratic Caucus regarding the United States' most consequential foreign policy issues, such as the Iraq War, President Obama's diplomatic agreement to limit Iran's nuclear program, and the Trans Pacific Partnership. We ask that you take this opportunity to support someone for committee chair who has a demonstrated track record of foreign policy leadership reflecting the principles, priorities, and aspirations of both the Democratic Caucus and rank-and-file Democratic voters.

As you lead the caucus in selecting the next HFAC Chair, our organizations believe it is time to finally choose an individual who has demonstrated leadership on, and expresses a commitment to, the following positions and policies:

Ending our Endless Wars

For nearly two decades, three consecutive Presidents have relied on a war authorization passed in the days after the September 11th attacks to wage war in dozens of countries around the world. Since March 2015, two U.S. presidents have waged war on behalf of the Saudi regime in Yemen without any authorization. We urge that the next HFAC Chair publicly commit to repealing the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for the Use of Military Force, fully reclaiming Congress's Constitutional war powers by utilizing provisions of the 1973 War Powers Act and Congress's funding authorities to end all unauthorized U.S. military participation in the Saudi/Emirati-led war in Yemen, and prohibiting and barring funding for an illegal military attack on Iran or Venezuela.

Oppose Militarization and Surveillance at Home

America's militarized approach to foreign policy has resulted in the use of many of the tools of warfare and espionage against Americans at home. We ask that a new HFAC Chair have a demonstrated record of opposing warrantless and unconstitutional mass surveillance within the United States, which has disproportionately targeted communities of color, immigrants, Muslim Americans, and activists. The Chair should also be active in efforts to curb and end the militarization of U.S. police, as well as ending the use of chemical weapons and lethal, disproportionate force against protesters exercising their Constitutional right to assembly.

Diplomacy First

The challenges of the 21st century depend on robust diplomatic solutions. Yet throughout the past several Administrations, Congress has allowed our national security to be driven almost exclusively through our armed forces and failed to prevent numerous Executive efforts to destroy successful diplomatic efforts.

We demand that the next HFAC Chair have a clear record of supporting robust U.S. diplomacy, including the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the Paris Climate Accords, a public commitment to defending and expanding nuclear and other arms control agreements, and opposing the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Oppose Regime Change and Scrutinize Non-Electoral Transfers of Power

Despite the catastrophe of the regime change effort in Iraq, the United States has over recent years carried out unconstitutional military assaults in Libya, Yemen, and Syria. Meanwhile, the United States has been quick to endorse transfers of power that occur through processes outside of national popular votes, such as in Honduras, Bolivia, Brazil, all of which resulted in the subversion of democracy and human rights violations. For many decades, political and economic elites in developing countries have relied on the United States and its military as an ally in destabilizing the ruling government they oppose. This often sets the stage for the interim regime to repress opponents, set terms for elections that work to their benefit, and exacerbates the longstanding problem of instability in these developing countries. We ask that the HFAC Chair oppose illegal U.S. efforts to forcibly overthrow foreign governments and instead support negotiation, mediation, dialogue, and a policy of transfers of power through free, fair, and pre-scheduled elections where the voting public has a full opportunity to decide on the future of their nation.

Oppose Broad-based Sanctions that Harm Civilians

The Trump Administration has demonstrated the brutal impacts of broad economic sanctions on civilians worldwide--particularly on poor, sick, elderly, and vulnerable populations. The new chair of HFAC should commit to reassessing the now-routine imposition of blunt economic sanctions that deprive people of income, food, medicine, and other essentials in countries such as Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela, while far too often only entrenching the targeted government. HFAC should pursue legislative and oversight efforts regarding Executive Branch abuse and overuse of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, and sanctions policy generally, along with committing to holding hearings on the humanitarian impacts of sanctions and economic war on millions of civilians abroad. The next chair should also seek to end the use of blanket sanctions that cause humanitarian crises by inflicting immoral economic pain on civilian populations.

Supporting a Just Resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The United States should work to build a future in which all Palestinians and Israelis live under full equality by upholding a foreign policy that centers human rights and dignity for all people. We call on the next HFAC chair to use a combination of pressure and incentives, including leveraging the annual \$3.8 billion in U.S. military funding to Israel, to get all parties to come to an agreement that upholds U.N. Security Council Resolutions and international law, including non-exhaustively: ending Israel's military occupation; disbanding Israel's illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; ending the Israeli military blockade of Gaza; and ending all attacks on civilians, be they Israeli or Palestinian.

A Global Economy that Prioritizes People and the Planet, not Corporate Profits

The global economy is experiencing a major economic crisis likely to reverberate for years to come, yet this crisis is only exacerbating a broken status quo which saw massive global income inequality, environmental degradation, and corporate malfeasance that hid profits offshore, evaded accountability,

and drove a race to the bottom. HFAC's historic lack of attention to the issues of economic rights must be reversed. We ask that the next HFAC Chair be committed to an economic agenda that centers workers' rights, universal access to lifesaving medicine, environmental justice, and reducing global inequality, while demonstrating a track record of taking on corporate corruption, including the fossil fuel industry, and opposing corporate trade deals such as the Trans Pacific Partnership and Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. In each instance, corporate trade agreements, drafted by industry in secret, disregarded major human rights abuses such as human trafficking and slavery in Malaysia and the impunity with which Colombian union leaders were murdered by corporate-backed paramilitary groups.

Ending the Arms Sales Rubber Stamp

During the past several years, U.S. arms sales have exploded to historic levels with disastrous consequences. U.S. manufactured weapons have been used to commit war crimes in Yemen, to violently repress peaceful protesters in Bahrain and Egypt, and to enable military occupation in Israel and Palestine, all with little congressional oversight. We ask that the next HFAC Chair publicly commit to fundamentally reassessing our policies on international arms sales, enacting enhanced protections for human rights, and ensuring that Congress' affirmative support is required for all future arms sales, including revising House rules to guarantee privileged floor votes to reject weapons transfers. We specifically ask you to reject any candidate who opposed blocking sales of cluster bombs, precision guided munitions, and other weapons to Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates during their intervention in Yemen after their use was documented and recognized as war crimes.

A Demonstrated Record of Independence from Special Interests

The House Foreign Affairs Committee maintains jurisdiction over lucrative weapons sales that benefit multi-billion-dollar arms manufacturers and other major corporate interests. HFAC's next chair must reject PAC contributions, donations, and other soft forms of influence-peddling and corruption routinely pursued by weapons producers powerful that stand to benefit from HFAC legislative action. We ask that the next HFAC Chair have a demonstrated record of transparency and good governance in their tenure in Congress.

Refugees Are Welcome Here

The world is currently experiencing the greatest forced displacement crisis in history, yet the United States is failing to meet its international obligations let alone provide global leadership. While Congress has condemned the current Administration's worst abuses, they have failed to fully leverage all their authority to demand and enact different policies. We ask that the next HFAC Chair be publicly committed to fully repealing the Trump Administration's Muslim, African, refugee, and asylum bans, restore access to asylum, and support a robust refugee resettlement program, at minimum returning to the historic average goal of 95,000 per year. This year in particular, it is essential that the Administration reopen the resettlement program and Congress adequately fund the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration and the Office of Refugee Resettlement to meet the needs of refugees during the COVID-19 crisis.

The next chair must also consider the role of U.S. policy in contributing to the creation of the refugee crisis. U.S. support for military engagement and regime change have led to large migrant outflows in places like Honduras, Libya, and Afghanistan, among others. Ongoing U.S. support and training for

Honduran security forces, which have a well-documented track record of human rights abuses, has exacerbated that country's migration crisis. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) triggered the displacement of millions of Mexican family farmers and spurred major out-migration by contributing to persistently high poverty and stagnant economic growth in Mexico. The next chair should be committed to exploring policy tools to address the root causes of the migration crisis.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the next HFAC Chair upholds these principles and advances the bold, progressive foreign policy that this country deserves.

Thank you for your consideration. To follow up on this request or raise any questions, please contact Yasmine Taeb of Demand Progress at yasmine@demandprogress.org or Erica Fein of Win Without War at erica@winwithoutwar.org.

Sincerely,

Action Corps
African Public Affairs Committee
American Friends Service Committee
American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)
American Muslims for Palestine
Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
Beyond the Bomb
Center for Economic and Policy Research
CODEPINK
Common Defense
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Demand Progress Education Fund
Democracy for America
Fellowship of Reconciliation: Peace Presence
Franciscan Action Network
Freedom Forward
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Government Information Watch
The Gravel Institute
Historians for Peace and Democracy
IfNotNow
Indivisible
Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
InterReligious Task Force on Central America and Colombia (IRTF Cleveland)
Jetpac
Jewish Voice for Peace Action

Just Foreign Policy
Justice Democrats
Justice for Muslims Collective
Justice Is Global
MADRE
MoveOn
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA)
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nonviolence International
Other98
Our Revolution
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Peace Direct
Progress America
Progressive Change Campaign Committee
Progressive Democrats of America
Project Blueprint
Public Citizen
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
Rethinking Foreign Policy
RootsAction.org
School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch)
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Sunrise Movement
United for Peace and Justice
U.S. Boats to Gaza
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights
US Labor Against the War
US Network for Democracy in Brazil (USNDB)
Veterans for American Ideals
Veterans For Peace
Vets for the People
Win Without War
Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
World BEYOND War
Yemeni Alliance Committee