

December 4, 2020

Dear Member of Congress:

We write on behalf of faith-based organizations that provide humanitarian assistance in Yemen. We request your assistance to postpone any new Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) classifications in Yemen until adequate plans are made in cooperation the humanitarian community, to ensure the classification will not result in a further deterioration of the dire situation facing Yemeni civilians.

Our faith traditions teach that we must all give account for how we treat the most vulnerable, and there are few people anywhere on the planet who are more vulnerable than civilians in Yemen. The US State Department recently stated, “more than 24 million people– 80 percent of the [Yemeni] population – require humanitarian assistance”. The UN World Food Program concurs, naming Yemen “The World’s Worst Humanitarian Catastrophe” and noting “two-thirds of all Yemenis are hungry. Nearly half do not know when they will eat next. The rate of child malnutrition is one of the highest in the world.”

Discussions are underway to classify Ansar Allah, who currently control large areas of north Yemen, an FTO. Should Ansar Allah be designated an FTO, the international humanitarian organizations responsible for delivering much of the humanitarian assistance in Yemen would be barred by US law from a broad range of interactions with them. It is, however, virtually impossible to deliver humanitarian assistance in large areas of north Yemen without interaction with Ansar Allah. Hence, an FTO designation would bar international NGO’s from providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance and food aid that vulnerable civilians rely upon. Without that aid, children, women and men will starve to death. Even an FTO designation with exemptions creates the kind of uncertainty and ambiguity that makes operating and planning in such a complex environment immensely difficult. Now, in the midst of widespread starvation, a pandemic which is raging out of control in Yemen, and a conflict that shows no signs of abating, the worst thing we can do is make delivering food to starving people even more difficult.

We pray you will oppose an FTO classification until adequate provisions are made in cooperation with the humanitarian community to ensure such a designation does not result in civilian starvation. Civilian starvation will not bring peace and security, but rather will only spread instability and suffering.

Respectfully yours,

Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA), International  
Bread for the World  
Catholic Relief Service  
Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy  
Church World Service  
Disabled Children's Fund

Faiths for Safe Water

Islamic Relief USA

L.A.C.E.S.

Lutheran World Relief-IMA World Health

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Presbyterian Church (USA)

The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society