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For the Chapel Hill Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

a proposed letter from the Meeting to the News and Observer.

This Holiday Season, Let's Use Our Peace-Making Powers to End the World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis

We write to thank you for your coverage of Yemen, now suffering from “the world's worst humanitarian crisis.” (News and Observer, December 8, 2018, “Rebel delegates at Yemen peace talks report some progress”) The war has put fourteen million Yemenis – half of the country's population -- on the brink of famine; and, every ten minutes, another child in Yemen dies from a preventable disease. But this is no sad, unavoidable natural crisis. It is an intentional Saudi military strategy in which, sadly, we Americans are complicit.

The U.S. needs to end military support for this unconscionable war. The Trump administration's decision to halt mid-air refueling for the Saudi coalition is a step in the right direction. Now Congress must bar refueling as a matter of law, rather than a reversible matter of presidential discretion. Additionally, the U.S. must stop providing military intelligence and training to the Saudi-led coalition. This is a matter of law -- Congress has never authorized the use of U.S. military force in the Saudi-led war in Yemen, making U.S. participation in the war illegal and unconstitutional. According to our Constitution, only Congress can declare war.

The post-Vietnam War Powers Resolution affirmed this Constitutional role, but Congress has never invoked the resolution. It is past time to do so and both houses of Congress have bills in place invoking the War Powers Resolution and directing the President to “remove United

States Armed Forces from hostilities in the Republic of Yemen that have not been authorized by Congress.” These are Senate Joint Resolution 54 and House Concurrent Resolution 138.

On December 13, 56 Senators, including six Republicans, voted in favor of SJR 54. Shamefully, Senator Burr voted no and Senator Tillis chose not to vote. Both Senators, in fact, had earlier voted to keep the bill bottled up in committee.

In the House of Representatives, N.C. Democrat David Price, N.C. Republican Walter Jones and ninety-four other Representatives have co-sponsored House Concurrent Resolution 138. The rest of our state’s Representatives have failed to do so and outgoing House Leadership has refused to allow a vote.

When the Democrats retake the majority in House in the New Year, we can expect these bills to reappear. We ask all North Carolinians to reach out to our Senators and Representatives and to urgently let them know that we want them to co-sign SJR 54 and H Con Res 138. We want no part of this horrifying war on the men, women, and children of Yemen.