

LET YEMEN LIVE! CALLING on SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND

Twelve peace/justice/social action NY groups, noted below, met with Emily Arsenault, State Director, Office of Senator Gillibrand on 5 Dec seeking her support and action to lift immediately the blockade in Yemen, which is causing famine for millions, and illness/deaths from cholera for 900,000 people including children. And to end all US support in the Saudi-led war, including further arms shipments or sales to Saudi Arabia, aiming towards a peaceful resolution to the current conflict. Marty (Granny Peace Brigade and Women in Black Against War) highlighted the "asks" urging a statement from the Senator followed by legislative action.

The discussion was lively.

Emily pointed out the Senator voted NO on weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, with one of the reasons being they could be used against civilian populations. Each of us contributed to aspects of the "asks" above, so these are not repeated. In addition, Nancy (Quaker Peace and Social Action Committee) impressed all of us with the simple one sentence agreement of the Quakers, slightly modified above. Alice S (Upper West Side Progressive Action and New York Metro Raging Grannies and their Daughters) noted that after a meeting with Congressman Espaillat, he signed onto H81, which includes most of our concerns, although it did not get to the House floor yet. She emphasized that Congress must vote before we go to war.

Florindo (Peace Action) noted that there are different ways we could end the war through influencing our allies in the region. Gerry (Vets for Peace) said that they oppose our actions in Yemen, with Emily noting the Senators role on the Armed Services Committee. The importance of former military opposing US military actions was highlighted. Alice S. (World Beyond War, CodePink) urged ending our endless wars. Her association with ICAN which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this year for achieving a UN ban on nuclear weapons was applauded! She was going to Oslo, with others to receive the Award. Emily noted this was her first meeting with a Nobel Prize winner. Alice reaffirmed the urgency for action in Yemen, to save millions of lives. Our Senators need to stand and take action NOW.

Bud (Catholic Worker Movement/Pax Christie) reflected on the vigils organized by Catholic Worker Movement starting with the fast during Holy Week, with daily rallies across from the UN. While CW's main task is caring for the needs of New York's poorest, the group decided more was needed so a Saturday vigil at Union Sq has been ongoing since June, attracting more and more participants, including local Yemeni-Americans. Recently live recordings have been done and have shared the vigil with people worldwide. Emily commented that this was really important, as the situation in Yemen needs to be more widely understood by New Yorkers. (Noted: vigil continues currently at Astor Pl. every Saturday 11-1pm.)

Taryn (Action Corps NY) invited the Senator and staff to join a peaceful rally in support of the "asks" above, organized by the Catholic Worker Movement NYC in association with around 15 other organizations, on 11 December at Ralph Bunch

Park between 10:30-12 noon and to make a presentation. Emily noted the Senator would be in DC. Taryn also provided an information packet of articles, background, our ask (prepared by Peace Action, Kate Alexander).

We took pics of the group, and then a few of us proceeded to the door of Senator Shumer, whose office has not yet responded to our many requests for a meeting, and took another pic. If we post, maybe they will call!

We received a polite response to our meeting with Emily. But, sadly, no specific commitment. No statement in support of ending the humanitarian crisis. No specific action. Reality check: this seems to have been the first time Yemen has come up for the Senator. And so, we need to keep the calls, notes, messages, meeting requests going.

Time is not on the side of the children, families in Yemen. Let Yemen Live!

Marty Rajandran