

September 17, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker, Majority and Minority Leaders, Chairmen and Ranking Members:

In the coming months, House and Senate negotiators will be coming to a final agreement on a National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020 to send to the president's desk for signature. We humbly ask you, as a matter of conscience and moral responsibility, to include in that agreement a prohibition on unauthorized war with Iran.

We can think of little more abhorrent than the idea of starting a new war in which thousands, possibly tens or hundreds of thousands, of innocent civilians would be needlessly slaughtered. Our political leaders often talk in terms of "limited strikes" and "surgical response", but the truth is that any U.S. military attack, no matter how restrained, would risk escalation into a major conflagration and could trigger an unpredictable and devastating response. While we agree that Iran should repudiate terrorism and not increase uranium enrichment, we believe that diplomatic negotiations are a far more effective approach than the current policy of "maximum pressure".

Under Article II of the Constitution, the president has the authority to order military action to repel a sudden attack against the United States. Otherwise, U.S. armed forces may be introduced into hostilities only pursuant to a congressional declaration of war or specific statutory authorization. No such declaration or authorization has been provided with respect to Iran, and we believe that Congress would be abdicating its constitutional duties by failing to insist upon this point at a time when the Executive Branch is claiming to have far more wide-ranging powers.

As leaders of faith-based organizations, we believe that war with Iran would be unjustifiable on moral and religious grounds and we urge a diplomatic and humanitarian solution to the current crisis. We pray that our government will step back from military acts as an option in this crisis atmosphere, and we call upon you to use your powers courageously and responsibly to avoid war with Iran.

In peace,

Diane Randall
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Jim Winkler
General Secretary and President
National Council of Churches

Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe
General Secretary
General Board of Church and Society
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Jim Wallis
President and Founder
Sojourners

Sr. Patricia Twohill
Prioress
Dominican Sisters of Peace

Lisa Sharon Harper
President and Founder
FreedomRoad.US

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Global Alliance Interfaith Networks

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton
Catholic Church

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General Secretary Emeritus
Reformed Church in America

Rev. Rob Schenck
The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon
Churches for Middle East Peace

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian
Armenian Orthodox Church

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Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan

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Grace Lutheran Church

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Executive Director
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Rev. Ron Stief
National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Rev. Traci Blackmon
Associate General Minister of Justice and Local Church Ministries
The United Church of Christ

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Presbyterian Church (USA)

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Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America

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