

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 31, 2017

The Honorable Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

We write to address the pressing and time-sensitive issue of our servicemen and women in hostilities in Syria.

The Constitution divides the powers of war between the Executive and Legislative branches. In Article I, Section 8, Clause 11, it explicitly assigns the power to declare war to Congress. The president is the Commander in Chief of the military yet must seek formal authorization for war. In order to avoid either of the two branches bypassing one another, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution in 1973. The important legislation established specific procedural steps that the president is required to take if he wants to engage in military action while also addressing the potential for the need of an emergency response to an attack.

Specifically, the War Powers Resolution requires the president to report to Congress within 48 hours of introducing U.S. Armed Forces into hostilities if there has not been a formal declaration of war. Forces must be withdrawn within 60 days unless Congress declares war or authorizes continued military involvement. Furthermore, the United States has been operating under a 15-year-old Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF), which passed in 2001 in order to pursue actors specifically involved in "the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11." The AUMF has instead served as a blank check for war against forces that the president unilaterally designates as "associated forces" of Al Qaeda, including military action against terrorist groups that did not even exist when it was passed.

According to reports from February 15, 2017, your administration proposed to introduce ground troops into Syria as part of the fight against the terrorist organization Daesh (also known as ISIS or ISIL). These reports were confirmed on March 8, 2017, when senior U.S. officials stated that Marines from the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit were deployed into Syria with heavy artillery such as howitzers to assist local Syrian forces in their fight to take back the city of Raqqa. These additional 400 troops add to the 500 Special Forces that are already on the ground training Syrians.

During your campaign, you stated that the United States cannot be the "policeman of the world." However, engaging in military action in Syria is doing just that. Your administration has attempted to rationalize its most recent actions by making a distinction as to what constitutes an action requiring congressional authorization. During a press briefing on March 9, 2017, a reporter questioned Press Secretary Sean Spicer on whether you were committed to going to Congress for a new AUMF to continue action in Syria. Spicer responded:

“I think there’s a big difference between an authorization of war than sending a few hundred advisors. And I think most in Congress would probably agree with that as well. I think that’s a big difference between a hostile action and going in to address some certain concerns, whether it’s certain countries in the Middle East or elsewhere. “

Nowhere in the Constitution does it state a distinction between “hostile action” and addressing “some certain concerns.” In fact, the War Powers Resolution reaffirms the Constitution by stating that the president has the power to introduce U.S. Armed Forces into hostilities only pursuant to:

- (1) a declaration of war;
- (2) specific statutory authorization, or
- (3) a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.

Congress has not authorized the use of force in Syria and there has been no attack on the U.S. where you would have the authority to avoid Congressional consent due to an imminent threat.

We urge you to uphold your Constitutional obligation and adherence to the law—specifically the War Powers Resolution—by terminating forces from Syria by May 7, 2017 or seeking Congress’s authorization to extend their stay. Your administration has 37 days left before you are obligated to withdraw our servicemen and women from Syria or seek the consent of Congress for forces to remain.

We refuse to abandon our Constitutional war power responsibilities and demand an actionable response. If Congress does not receive a meaningful response, we stand willing to use all tools at the disposal of the legislative branch to assert these Constitutional authorities, including the possibility of an expedited vote pursuant to the War Powers Resolution on the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria.

Sincerely,

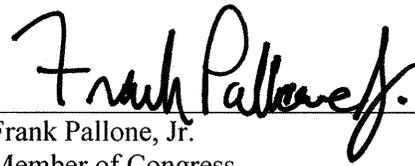
  
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Member of Congress

  
Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Walter B. Jones  
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



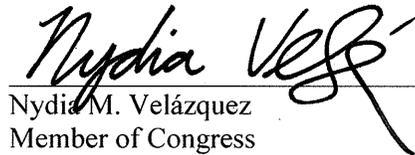
John Conyers  
Member of Congress



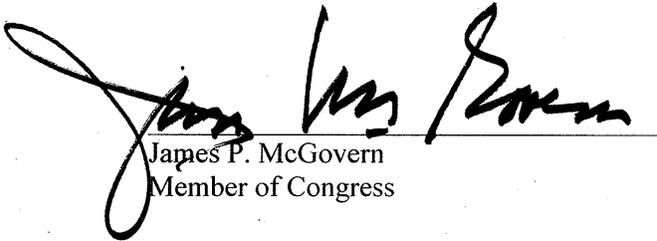
Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



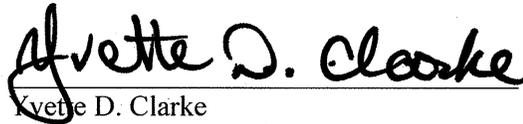
Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



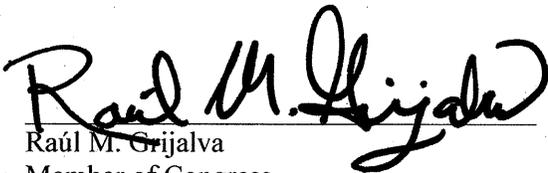
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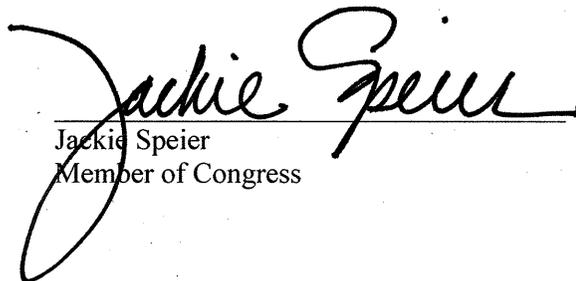
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