

July 11, 2023

Dear Member of Congress,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our support for Rep. Jamaal Bowman's [amendment](#) reaffirming that the Constitution and the War Powers Resolution of 1973 grants Congress the sole power to declare war and authorize military action. Specifically, this amendment would give Congress a full year from the date that the NDAA is signed into law (likely late 2023) to hold a much needed debate and vote regarding whether to authorize military action in Syria.

This amendment is identical to Rep. Bowman's amendments that have received floor votes for the [past two years](#), which were supported by [strong majorities of House Democrats](#) and growing numbers of Republicans. This amendment has been consistently supported by Robert S. Ford, former U.S. Ambassador to Syria under President Obama (2011-2013), who has previously written to Congress that: "[p]assage of Representative Bowman's amendment can serve as an important catalyst for overdue Congressional oversight, and I strongly urge you to vote in favor."

The amendment itself does not take a position on what U.S. policy in Syria should be going forward, as it leaves ample time for Congress to work with the Executive Branch and come to a conclusion about whether to authorize the current military action, decide against authorizing a military action, or authorize a more expansive or limited military action. For these reasons, the amendment has been supported in the past both by members who support ongoing military action in Syria and by members who seek to wind down military action in Syria. If Congress does ultimately decide against authorizing military action, the Bowman amendment would support Congress's decision by restricting funding for any unauthorized military action.

The intent of the amendment is fully consistent with the longstanding position of [bipartisan groups in Congress](#) that [have long](#) supported [President Obama's view](#) that this military action in Syria required Congressional authorization. [Bipartisan majorities voted in 2015](#) that "Congress has the constitutional duty to debate and determine whether or not to authorize the use of military force" in Syria, but then-Speaker [Paul Ryan refused to deliver on his promise to](#) bring an AUMF to the House floor for a [debate and vote](#). Furthermore, this resolution seeks to address the violation of Congress's war powers resulting from the decision [of the previous administration to maintain troops in Syria in an unauthorized and illegal mission to "secure the oil."](#)

Passage of this amendment has become even more necessary in the past year as the dangers of escalation for US servicemembers have continued to grow, as exemplified by tit-for-tat attacks between the U.S. and militias that included a [drone attack](#) that killed a US contractor and injured five servicemembers in March. Defense Department officials later [told Congress](#) that U.S. forces have come under attack "83 separate times" since 2021. According to a [June report in the Washington Post](#), hostile militias in the region are planning an "escalation" against U.S. forces in the region, including "building and training forces to use more powerful armor-piercing roadside bombs intended specifically to target U.S. military vehicles and kill U.S. personnel." In addition, there are new troubling reports in recent weeks that "Russian military aircraft continue to penetrate US-controlled airspace over Syria," including [recent attempts](#) to "dogfight" U.S. pilots, leading the Defense Department to deploy F-22 Raptors from Langley AFB to the Middle East in recent weeks. CENTCOM has [acknowledged](#) that the situation "increases the risk of escalation or miscalculation," jeopardizing President Biden's longstanding efforts to avoid direct confrontation with Russia. There is risk inherent in any deployment, as demonstrated by the helicopter "mishap" that [injured 22 servicemembers](#) last month.

This risk does not end at U.S. servicemembers, but also extends to people inside Syria who have no say in either U.S. deployment decisions or choices made by armed actors in and out of the country who want to use their communities as a battleground. U.S. military action in Syria has previously made this risk a reality. Just this May, what was initially identified as a lethal strike on a "senior al Qaeda leader" appears, instead, to have [targeted](#) a shepherd and father of 10 in Idlib. The track record of U.S. lethal strikes in Syria and [repeated instances](#) of U.S.-caused civilian harm should also factor into Congressional debate over the U.S. presence there.

With our troops and everyday people directly in harm's way, and now facing growing threats and risk of escalation, the Bowman amendment will ensure that Congress can exercise its constitutional duty to provide oversight and decide whether to authorize ongoing participation of U.S. servicemembers in hostilities in Syria. We urge you to reaffirm the U.S. Constitution and laws and vote in favor of this amendment that will respect and honor the sacrifices made by our servicemembers serving in this dangerous warzone.

Sincerely,

Action Corps  
Bring Our Troops Home  
Center for Constitutional Rights  
Center for International Policy  
Common Defense  
Defense Priorities Initiative  
Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN)  
Demand Progress Action  
Historians for Peace and Democracy  
If Not Now  
Institute for Policy Studies - New Internationalism Project  
Justice Democrats  
Justice Is Global  
Just Foreign Policy  
MADRE  
Muslims for Just Futures  
Pax Christi USA  
Peace Action  
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft  
R Street  
RootsAction.org  
Secure Justice  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries  
Veterans For Peace  
Win Without War  
World BEYOND War