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Yemeni and international organizations have called for an “immediate cessation of hostilities” in Yemen, warning that 14 million people are now “on the brink of famine.” UNICEF is warning that the Saudi assault and blockade on Hodeidah is increasing shortages of food, drinking water and medicine. The group says a Yemeni child now dies from a preventable disease every 10 minutes. In a web exclusive conversation, we interview Kathy Kelly, co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, a campaign to end U.S. military and economic warfare.

AMY GOODMAN: This is Democracy Now!, [democracynow.org](#), The War and Peace Report. I’m Amy Goodman, as we bring you Part 2 of our discussion on Yemen, as well as Afghanistan, with Kathy Kelly. In Yemen, the crisis continues there, only gets worse, where the U.S.-backed, Saudi-led coalition has drastically escalated its assault on the Yemeni port city of Hodeidah. The Guardian reports there have been at least 200 airstrikes in the past week, killing at least 150 people. One Saudi airstrike destroyed a home, killing a father and his five children.

The attacks come as calls grow for a ceasefire for the 3-year war, which has devastated Yemen. On Thursday, a group of Yemeni and international groups called for immediate cessation of hostilities in Yemen, warning that 14 million people are now on the brink of famine. UNICEF has warned the Saudi assault and blockade on Hodeidah is increasing shortages of food, drinking water and medicine. The group says a Yemeni child now dies from a preventable disease every 10 minutes.

GEERT CAPPELAERE: Every 10 minutes in Yemen, a child is dying from preventable diseases. ... Today in Yemen, 1.8 million children under the age of 5 are suffering from acute malnutrition; 400,000 of these children are suffering the life-threatening form of severe acute malnutrition.

AMY GOODMAN: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis have both called for a ceasefire in Yemen. Meanwhile, The Washington Post reports the Trump administration is considering designating the Houthis a terrorist organization. On Thursday, a group of protesters rallied outside the Saudi Consulate in New York.

ABDULWALI SALEH: My name is Abdulwali Saleh. I’m a United American—a Yemeni United American Organization president. What we’re doing here, we’re protesting against the war in Yemen. We try to send a message to—not just to the Saudi consul, whatever; we try to send a message to the whole world. You know, Yemen has been destroyed. Kids has been dying. We’re in famine. And a month, three months from now, two months from now, 23 million people will be at the brink of famine, meaning they don’t have enough food for the second day. So, we—and Saudi Arabia has been bombing Yemen, bombing the kids, bombing the infrastructure, bombing families, bombing houses, destroying everything, and by the help of the United States, by the help of the president, the crazy president, President Trump.

AMY GOODMAN: We are continuing our conversation with Kathy Kelly, co-coordinator of

Voices for Creative Nonviolence, a campaign to end U.S. military and economic warfare. She took part in Thursday's protest.

Talk about what it would mean if the Trump administration designated the Houthis a terrorist organization, Kathy.

KATHY KELLY: Well, I think, certainly, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman would get the impression that the Trump administration really isn't all that serious in calling for a cessation of hostilities, that in fact the Trump administration would want to show an alignment with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Never yet has a U.N. resolution in the Security Council designated the Saudis or the Emiratis, the leaders of this coalition, as even warring parties in Yemen. So if you single out the Houthis and you say that they are the terrorists, then there are all kinds of laws in terms of the United States "war on terror" that further enable United States attacks and United States alliances.

And it could also complicate, terribly, desperately needed distribution of food and of medicines and of fuel. And already the Saudis have caused a trickle of imports through that very, very vital port, whenever they want to say, "Oh, there's a threat to us, and so we have to do more inspections of the ships."

And so, why is the president making that suggestion? I mean, would his base really know who the Houthis are or what the Houthi history has been in Yemen? I doubt that. I think that maybe he wants to show to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman we're essentially still on the same side, because I think President Trump, as a businessman, knows that Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics and Raytheon sell huge amounts of weaponry to the Saudis, and he doesn't really want to put those kinds of contracts into jeopardy. So we don't hear him responding to that impassioned plea from the United Nations agency leaders saying, "Consider the children. Consider these traumatized kids." They're being shelled, morning, noon and night. The medics say that they're terrified inside the hospitals in Hodeidah. And some of these children are already paralyzed by diphtheria. They're hungry. They're too hungry to cry.

AMY GOODMAN: What role would U.S. Congress play? I mean, now, in the new one, you have Chris Murphy of Connecticut, the senator. You have Ro Khanna, the congressman from Silicon Valley in California. What legislation would force the hand of the U.S. when it comes to cutting off aid to Saudi Arabia, pressuring them? And the significance of Mattis and Pompeo saying they're calling for a ceasefire, clearly under enormous pressure, because the murder of Khashoggi in the Saudi Consulate in Turkey highlighted what the Saudi regime did, and brought more attention, interestingly, to the case of Yemen?

KATHY KELLY: Well, you can never bypass the legislative efforts, but I think we have to recognize 30 days leading up to a ceasefire is a long time, when there are aerial attacks, when there are fiercely trained warriors, Janjaweed warriors from the South Sudan being brought in as mercenaries, and others fighting their way up the Red Coast, surrounding Hodeidah. Thirty days is a good stretch of time if you're in the Saudi or Emirati military and strategizing for how you're going to take over that city and trap the Houthis and be able to get the upper hand.

What can Congress do? I think, instead of saying that they're going to wait for 30 days, they could say immediately, right now. I mean, President Obama did do it in 2016 after the attack on a funeral killed 149 people. He said, "That's it. We're not going to sell any more precision-guided missiles and cluster bombs and the lengthy ships that are used to blockade the ports." He stopped those sales. President Trump has turned them on again. But I think if the Congress could put through a law that said the United States can no longer refuel the Saudi and Emirati warplanes, then that would make a big difference in terms of the aerial attacks. The United States is completely complicit. It's like a drive-by. You know, if a drive-by shooter has obtained the car and the fuel and the bullets and the map and the surveillance and funding from another entity, then isn't that other entity pretty complicit? And if the United States cut all that off, then it would, according to Iona Craig, bring the war to an end within a day.

AMY GOODMAN: Finally, Kathy, describe what happened yesterday at the—outside the Saudi Consulate, when you all were protesting.

KATHY KELLY: Well, the wagons pulled up to take us off to a precinct and to be booked. The—

AMY GOODMAN: And you were protesting specifically the Saudi Consulate—

KATHY KELLY: At the Saudi Consulate.

AMY GOODMAN: —around their bombing of Yemen.

KATHY KELLY: Exactly. And I think there were two dozen police people with the plastic handcuffs. And then, a detective—

AMY GOODMAN: And you were blocking the entrances to the consulate?

KATHY KELLY: Yes, three entrances. And Detective Bogucki came, and he recognized us. He remembered, as did we, that he had been in charge of arresting us numerous times when we protested against United States economic sanctions against Iraq, and we would bring lentils and rice to the steps of the United States Mission to the U.N. And every week we were arrested there. And so, you know, I kind of waved to him. And he decided to call it off. And then he—

AMY GOODMAN: Call the arrests off.

KATHY KELLY: Yeah, yeah. And he said, "You know, we're really on the same side, and you're preaching to the choir." And what I wanted to say is that, "Well, then the choir, collectively, needs to take action to change these situations." And I asked him if he didn't agree that there was criminal activity happening inside that consulate. And he didn't disagree.

KATHY KELLY: Children are dismembered every day by bombs that are refueled by U.S. planes. Children are dismembered, just like the journalist Jamal Khashoggi was dismembered. And when they die of starvation, they die from really being strangulated.

DETECTIVE FRANK BOGUCKI: Well, again, all I could—all I could say, as a representative

from the NYPD here, we're here—

KATHY KELLY: [inaudible] remains that matter.

DETECTIVE FRANK BOGUCKI: Yeah. We know each other. I know all the familiar faces.

KATHY KELLY: Ten years old.

PROTESTER: We're bombing schools. We're bombing schools and playgrounds.

DETECTIVE FRANK BOGUCKI: Right. But to preach to me—

KATHY KELLY: Hospitals.

DETECTIVE FRANK BOGUCKI: I understand the cause, but I cannot—my bounds of jurisdiction go only so far.

KATHY KELLY: But he said that's not his job. Well, it's all of our job. We need to look for the changing of the guard that will say we're no longer going to protect this kind of criminal and dangerous and ruthless behavior.

AMY GOODMAN: I also want to ask you about what's happening in Afghanistan, the longest war in U.S. history. The inspector general for the Pentagon's war effort is reporting Afghanistan's government continues to lose ground to the Taliban, with Kabul's influence reaching just over half of Afghanistan's districts. The U.S. war recently entered its 18th year. This means children born after the start of the war are now old enough to join the military and fight in Afghanistan. Earlier this week, Utah National Guard Major Brent Taylor was killed in action Saturday, after an Afghan army commando he was helping to train turned against him. Taylor was 39 years old, had taken a 1-year leave of absence as mayor of North Ogden, Utah, to deploy to Afghanistan. And that attack came just weeks after the Taliban claimed responsibility for an attack that killed the top Afghan general, Abdul Raziq, in the southern province of Kandahar, prompting a week's delay for voting in the region. The Pentagon said U.S. Army General Jeffrey Smiley was shot and wounded in that attack. And the top U.S. general in Afghanistan, Scott Miller, was also there but survived uninjured. That's a lot to take in, but can you talk about the latest in Afghanistan, a place you have been so many times?

KATHY KELLY: The desperation is so palpable. I think that 21 provinces afflicted by drought is also going to cause a swelling of the populations that, in desperation, go to refugee camps. And in the winter weather, those places become more squalid and more dangerous, more difficult to survive. And there simply are not jobs available for young people. The jobs that are available very often have to do with picking up a weapon and learning how to kill, or risking being killed, for any one of various warlords.

I am continually impressed by the young people whom we've been able to visit. They just recently, in September, organized an interprovince, interethnic gathering of young people who came together and said, "No, we don't want more fighting. We don't want more war." But I

almost never hear them saying that they have any faith that somehow a government, anywhere, is going to do something to help them. They are helped by various relief and refugee groups who have, within the camps, done some estimable work. You know, you see solar-powered batteries being installed in the roofs of these hovels so that the kids can gather together for some kind of classes, and, you know, people trying to develop wells that will be functioning. But people, I think, are so accustomed to the corruption and to the dismissal of their needs on the part of governing people, that they don't expect much from the United States or from the government of Ashraf Ghani.

AMY GOODMAN: What do you think needs to happen?

KATHY KELLY: Well, I think the United States should immediately take all of the \$45 billion that they're planning to sow into military endeavors in Afghanistan, and turn that over to trying to help rebuild the agricultural infrastructure. I think the United States should say, if Afghanistan does have trillions of dollars' worth of mineral wealth, that belongs to the Afghan people and not to United States speculators or people from other countries who might decide to invade in order to, for greed, take over those resources.

I think the United States people should be encouraged to say, "We're sorry. We're so very sorry for what has happened." Thirty thousand refugees is a scandal, considering the wars that we've created all over the world. I think we should say to people in Afghanistan, "We would welcome as many of you as we can bring in to our society." And we should certainly try to assist through reparations, but not to give any reparations money to Afghan government agencies or U.S. agencies that have already demonstrated scandalous and terrible corruption.

AMY GOODMAN: Are there meaningful negotiations that are taking place?

KATHY KELLY: Well, apparently, the United States and the Taliban are negotiating, and there are other countries, including Russia, that are involved. It isn't very correct, I guess, to talk about the Taliban anymore, because there are so many different groupings within the Taliban, and, of course, other warlords besides the Taliban, including the Islamic State of the Khorasan Province. So, I don't want to minimize or underestimate how difficult these kinds of negotiations are, but I think the turning the other way, in terms of the narco-trafficking, has been very, very steady, and the United States, again, has been able to assure the major defense contractors, the companies that make weapons and supply the United States military, that their status quo interests in this war won't be harmed, won't be dislodged.

AMY GOODMAN: I wanted to end by asking you about the horrific mass killing in California. Police in California say the gunman who attacked the bar in Thousand Oaks, killed 12 people, was a former marine who once deployed to Afghanistan. He was 28 years old. Ian David Long had a history of mental health issues, including possibly PTSD. Talk about this. I mean, this is very sketchy information we have, but this link of so many soldiers coming back to the United States with PTSD.

KATHY KELLY: You know, Amy, I've never gone through boot camp, but I cannot imagine that I would go through even just the boot camp, you know, preliminary training, and come out on the

other side of it and still have my emotional, psychological life intact. And when people are sent over to other countries, they're separated from family, from friends, from communities. They are in a sort of a bubble, in a sense, because they—it's not really all that common to leave the base. And I think that people develop perspectives on life that perhaps just don't carry over when they go back to the United States. It's hard to fit in.

And, you know, we have the reality of people like Matt Hoh, whom we've so admired and appreciated, a former military who has now become an objector to all forms of militarism. But, you know, he just put out very clearly that he's going to Chicago because he needs help with post-traumatic stress. I don't even say the D of that acronym any longer, because I don't think it is a disorder. I think it's to be expected that when people are under the stress of being trained to kill or loan themselves to kill or possibly be killed or maimed, that life isn't going to pick up in some normal way immediately afterward.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to read you from today's New York Times. Sam Tanner, who served with Ian Long and described him as a friend, told The New York Times, "I'm not surprised someone I knew ended up doing a mass shooting. We had another guy recently committed suicide by cops in Texas. Guys struggle. We've lost more marines in our peer group to suicide than we ever lost in Afghanistan." Kathy Kelly?

KATHY KELLY: And we've had those statistics now for years. And so, you know, the hollowness of saying "Thank you for your service" or constantly portraying the militarism in this country as a new religion, that you're to place your faith in this, that that's what's going to save us, that the ethics that the military chooses are always to be expressive of what the U.S. wants, this doesn't make any sense to people that are actually sent to other countries, come back either prepared to end their lives or sometimes end the lives of others repeatedly. So, why not stop and take stock and, particularly as we move toward Armistice Day this year, question whether or not we should still be a permanent warfare state.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, Kathy Kelly, I thank you so much for being with us.

KATHY KELLY: Thank you, Amy.