WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Our longest wars are not over. In 2017, the war in Afghanistan will be 16 years old, and the war in Iraq will enter its 14th year. In Congress and in the press, exit plans for these wars are no longer demanded, even as new troops are deployed. And, we have used the same AUMF for over 15 years. To support and save our troops, and our tax dollars, Congress must have rigorous debate on our military presence.

1. After 14 Years of U.S. Military Presence, Iraq is a Failed State and Civilians Are Paying the Price

Before the conflict, Iraq had one of the region’s best health care systems. Since 2003, half of the nation’s doctors have fled. Now, the World Health organization estimates that 70% of Iraqis lack access to clean water. The human and economic costs of these wars, according to the Brown University Costs of War project, will continue for decades - some costs not peaking until mid-century.

U.S. policymakers believed that the wars would bring democracy to Afghanistan and Iraq. Instead, today both countries rank extremely low in global rankings of political freedom with warlords continuing to hold power in Afghanistan with US support, and Iraqi communities more segregated today than before by ethnicity and gender. IS is gaining territory and lives in that context.

2. Military Escalation in Iraq and Syria Has Caused the World’s Largest Refugee Crisis

Millions of Iraqis have been displaced indefinitely, contributing to the world’s largest refugee crisis with over 65.3 million people displaced, most from Iraq and Syria as they flee escalating violence and military presence. The number of Afghan, Iraqi and Pakistan war refugees and internally displaced persons - 7.6M - is equivalent to everyone living in Massachusetts and Delaware fleeing their homes. It is no coincidence that refugees are coming from the countries in which the U.S. has escalated military action.

3. American and Allied Soldiers, and Civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, Injuries and Deaths With No End in Sight

370,000 people have died due to direct war violence, not including indirect deaths from malnutrition, damaged health systems, and other impacts of war. 210,000 of these deaths have been civilians, and most experts acknowledge that number is underestimated. Over 6,800 U.S. troops have died in Iraq and Afghanistan, and over 970,000 disability claims have been registered with the VA as a result of these wars. In addition, over 6,900 U.S. contractors have died in Iraq and Afghanistan.

4. Wars Have Cost Americans $4-8 Trillion, Bankrupting a Generation

The US federal price tag for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars — including an estimate for veterans' future medical and disability costs — is is about $4.4 trillion. This does not include future interest costs on borrowing for the wars. The Brown University Costs of War project estimates that the total costs of these wars - with interest payments - will be $8 trillion, and that U.S. taxpayers will be paying for these wars until 2054. If we continue our ongoing military campaigns, these costs will grow.