

Stop Mad King Donald's Iran war

An open letter to members of US Congress


By Jeffrey D. Sachs
Advisor to three UN Secretaries-General

Dear Members of Congress,
In truly deranged remarks to world leaders at the UN, Donald Trump declared that “I have a big decision to make,” whether to negotiate a deal with Iran or instead to “annihilate the Islamic Republic” and drive Iran “into hell with no chance of survival”. He posed it as his personal choice. The fact that the American people are dead set against Trump’s war means nothing. And as for the voters, he added that he gives “absolutely no credence” to the coming mid-term elections in deciding on his actions and on Iran’s fate. Nothing binds this President. He is not bound by law, the Constitution, the UN Charter, or public opinion at home and abroad. When asked at the start of the year whether he has any limits on his power, he said “Yeah, there is one thing. My own morality. My own mind. It’s the only thing that can stop me.”
Trump opened his speech with the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, hailing America’s freedom. The fact is that Trump’s authoritarianism far outdoes that of King George III, against whom the colonies rebelled. Among the founders’ indictments of Mad King George was that “He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.” Yet our own mad king has decided that the survival of a whole civilization is in his

hands alone. Trump is emboldened in his contempt for Congress because the Republican members of Congress have abdicated their constitutional responsibilities, terrified of their own president, and forsaking their constituents for campaign lucre from AIPAC and the military-industrial complex. The Constitution is unambiguous regarding Congress’s responsibility. Article I, Section 8 assigns Congress, not the President, the sole power to declare war. That is not a choice or an option. The Constitution doesn’t say that Congress can play dead and let the President declare war. The Framers made this choice deliberately because they were explicitly rejecting the power of a king to take the nation to war. In Federalist 69, Hamilton assured the public that the President’s war powers would be far less than the British monarch’s. Madison stated the principle plainly in a letter to Jefferson in 1798: “The constitution supposes, what the History of all Govts demonstrates, that the Ex. is the branch of power most interested in war, & most prone to it. It has accordingly with studied care vested the question of war in the Legislature.”
The founders’ careful design has been overturned because of the unconstitutional subservience of the Republican members of Congress to Trump and to the military-industrial-digital complex. And yes, under Democratic presidents, most Democratic members of Congress also looked the other way when those presidents chose to go to war. The war with Iran is Trump’s

folly but Congress’s disgrace for not stopping it. It is a war without a purpose that has created mass suffering in Iran, tens of billions of dollars of direct outlays, and staggering damage to American military bases in eight countries of the Middle East. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has sent world and American prices soaring for oil, gas, fertilizers, and more. And the world has duly noted that Iran can hold its own against US aggression, albeit at great sacrifice to the people of Iran and the region. America’s much vaunted AI battlefield has been exposed in the most horrifying way. On the first day of the war, an American missile struck the girls’ elementary school there, killing more than 150 people, most of them girls aged seven to 12, and the military’s own inquiry reportedly found that overreliance on artificial intelligence contributed to the targeting. Trump blamed “Iran or somebody else,” and seven months later the administration has offered no findings, no apology and no compensation to the families. The President’s threat to annihilate a member state of the United Nations, delivered from the General Assembly podium, disgraced Trump in front of the world. It also violated Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits even the threat of force against another state. Nearly all the world stands aghast. I write to you because you cannot simply walk away from Trump’s recklessness, shaking your heads silently. You have a job to do, so do it. The craven



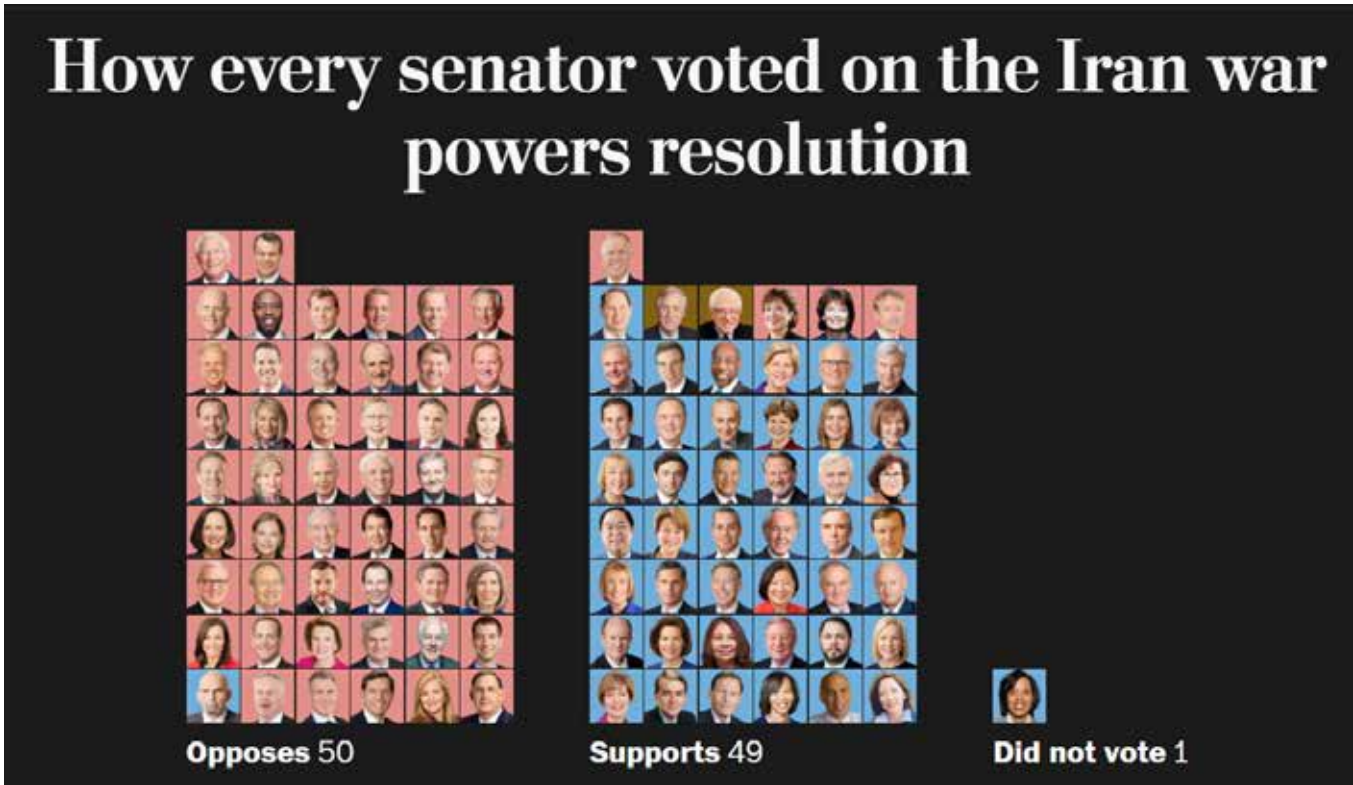
● BEN HICKEY/THE ATLANTIC

Republican Party has to find even a minimal level of guts to tell Trump, “No, you do not have the power to destroy Iran. Any war with Iran depends on us, and we don’t support you and our constituents want this war to stop.” A clear majority of Americans oppose this war, and poll after poll shows that the opposition to the war is growing. A few Republicans have found that courage. Two weeks ago, three more Republicans broke ranks to support ending the war. Their colleagues should follow. Many of you receive campaign contributions from military contractors and technology companies deeply involved in

the war. Many of you take money from AIPAC, which champions the war that Netanyahu did so much to help launch. This has to stop as it is a dereliction of your constitutional duty and a violation of your oath. Congress holds the power of the purse. The fiscal year ends on September 30, and every bill that funds the Pentagon is your opportunity to prohibit funds for unauthorized offensive operations against Iran. The right course for the US is simple. Congress should cut off funding, and the US should stop further attacks and go home. We need no agreement with Iran or anyone else to stop the war that we started. By ending the war, you will immediately restore some sanity and safety to the world energy markets, food supplies, and prices faced by Americans and others around the world. How America has declined from the glorious moment when John F. Kennedy stood at the same podium at the UN on September 20, 1963, after having negotiated the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union. He told the assembled leaders that the treaty can be a lever, and Archimedes, in explaining the principles of the lever, was said to have declared to his friends: “Give me a place where I can stand — and I shall move the world.” My fellow inhabitants of this planet: Let us take our stand here in this Assembly of nations. And let us see if we, in our own time, can move the world to a just and lasting peace. Members of Congress, to save our nation’s honor and our Constitution, you must do your duty to stop this war; and stop Trump’s brazen, destructive, and unconstitutional grab for power.



The war with Iran is Trump’s folly but Congress’s disgrace for not stopping it. The right course for the US is simple. Congress should cut off funding, and the US should stop further attacks and go home. We need no agreement with Iran or anyone else to stop the war that we started. By ending the war, you, members of Congress, will immediately restore some sanity and safety to the world energy markets, food supplies, and prices faced by Americans and others around the world.



✓ The illustration shows how each member of the US Senate voted on September 24, 2026, on the latest attempt to block President Donald Trump from ordering further strikes on Iran.
● THE WASHINGTON POST

The article first appeared on Common Dreams.