# Twitter Thread by Scott Paul



**Scott Paul**
@ScottTPaul

**As has been widely reported, Sec. Pompeo is moving to designate the Houthis in #Yemen as a terrorist organization. I can't stress enough how damaging that decision would be – but I'm going to try.**

## THREAD

### 1/

First, let's say one thing plainly: the Houthis, like all parties in Yemen, have committed absolutely despicable acts. The victims and survivors of this conflict, including of the Houthis, deserve justice.

2/

But a terrorism designation is not an instrument of justice or accountability. It is a political tool with financial and reputational repercussions for the designee and far-reaching consequences for others, particularly people in poverty

3/

In #Yemen, those consequences depend on the mechanism for designation & licenses (exceptions) that are issued. ANY designation of Houthis will deal a blow to an economy whose collapse has already killed tens or hundreds of thousands

4/

The US government needs to call off plans to designate the Houthis as a group. If they don't, the best-case scenario is that they're listed by Treasury, meaning they'd be subject to sanctions

5/

In that case, licenses can be issued for humanitarian assistance and maybe even some commercial activities. Humanitarian funding (already low) will take a hit, & some banks will refuse to transfer funds or finance imports. This would impact the whole country, not just North

6/

But in the worst-case – an FTO listing by State – many of these activities would just stop. Humanitarian aid in N. Yemen by US-based orgs and w/US funding would be effectively criminalized. Importers will face similar obstacles. No license or authorization wld be available 7/

This is b/c the extent of the Houthis' control and the importance of public services make N. Yemen unique among places where we deliver aid. The designation work-arounds in place for Somalia, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria won't help – to the extent they do work in those places

8/

(it's worth noting that in 2011, the USG's failure to promptly issue licenses for humanitarian assistance substantially contributed to a famine that killed more than a quarter of a million Somalis) 9/

This is taking place just as Yemen is entering a new, dangerous period of food insecurity. Via @missyryan and @johnhudson, more than 47,000 additional people will be in famine-like conditions early next year – before a designation is taken into account https://t.co/sPzfNYLNjW 10/

This reduces the debate within the administration to an argument about whether it's more prudent to play with matches or Molotov cocktails in a warehouse filled with TNT

11/

What's more, as @petersalisbury explains, a designation wouldn't actually result in advancing any US goals with the Houthis (unless you count making nice to Gulf partners and boxing in a future administration)

12/

https://t.co/gtI0XyZ9Lw

The final analysis boils down to whether it's worth sparking the largest famine in recent decades in order to engage in high-profile name-calling. There is a correct answer to that question.

END